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Dungeon

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STAPLES '03

In This Issue

Dungeon

"They were immediately and absolutely recognizable as adventurers. . . A few performed useful services: research, cartography, and the like. Most were nothing but tomb raiders. They were scum who died violent deaths, hanging on to a certain cachet among the impressionable through their undeniable bravery and their occasionally impressive exploits."

China Miéville
Perdido Street Station



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8 Richard Baker

From the author of issue #86's "Rana Mor," this massive FORGOTTEN REALMS adventure takes the characters on a quest in the Silver Marches. A powerful evil force, long ago imprisoned by a cabal of wizards, seeks its vengeance against the Realms. A D&D FORGOTTEN REALMS adventure for 13th-level PCs.

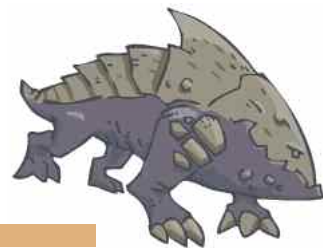
Bonus Subscriber Section! The Chasm Bridge 59

Desmond R. Varady

An important chasm crossing in the Underdark has been claimed as the territory of a power-hungry wizard. He has taken to charging exorbitant tolls to any who would cross the bridge. Either way they choose—pay or slay—the PCs must pay the price. This D&D adventure is a Revised 3rd Edition conversion of a module that originally appeared in *DRAGON* #131. It has never before appeared in the pages of *DUNGEON*. A D&D adventure for 7th-level PCs.



ON THE COVER: Bazim-Gorag, the two-headed slaad lord of "Prison of the Firebringer," has the muscle and magic to stomp any interlopers. Greg Staples shows the deadly Firebringer in all his glory on this issue's cover.



v.160



Bonus Subscriber Section! Map of Mystery **77**

Craig Zipse

This mysterious structure might be a temple to a god of death or the lair of any group of nefarious villains.



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Arcana Unearthed: Designing a Different *Player's Handbook* **8**

Monte Cook

Dungeon Master's Guide author Monte Cook takes us inside the process of designing *Arcana Unearthed*, a variant *Player's Handbook* that debuts this month!



Iron Lords of Jupiter **14**

Lizard

Strand yourself on an alien world of science fantasy with this *d20 MODERN* Mini-Game of planetary romance. Ready your cutlass and ray gun and prepare yourself for battle with the Iron Lords of Jupiter!

Downer **46**

The long-awaited conflict with the beholder Lord Manglecramps comes to a head as Downer once again crosses paths with the adventurers who started his current troubles.

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ON THE FLIPSIDE: Cover artist Niklas Janssen brings a twist to the standard planetary romance cover painting, at long last letting a strong woman protect a swooning, muscle-bound alien. We'd like to think Frank Frazetta and Boris Vallejo would be proud.



If you choose to attack, turn to p. 23

Everyone who haunted bookstore fantasy/science-fiction sections in the early 1980s remembers the "Choose Your Own Adventure" phenomenon.

For a few brief years, a half-dozen publishers flooded the literary market with non-linear adventure books in which the reader dictated the flow of the story by making a choice every page or so. Many of the books had fantasy trappings, with readers assuming the roles of powerful wizards, mighty warriors, or curious squires who happened upon challenging mysteries and fabulous adventures. TSR even got into the act with the popular *Endless Quest* series, in which the reader could face off against ice mountains filled with ravenous giants, dungeons of dread, and deadly rainbow dragons. The *Fighting Fantasy* series, originally published in Great Britain by Penguin Books and here in the States by Dell Publishing, featured more story choices per page, fantastic art by original *Fiend Folio* artists like Russ Nicholson, and an honest-to-God 11-page solo-play RPG system, complete with combat rules and a 2-page character sheet.

Unsurprisingly, *Fighting Fantasies* were cherished by young gamers (this editor among them), and the gamebook phenomenon probably served to turn more young readers into active RPG gamers than anything that's come since. It couldn't last forever, though, and by the 1990s the adventure gamebook genre had died.

Imagine my surprise, then, when a new British operation called Myriador sent me a 40-page d20 conversion of *The Warlock of Firetop Mountain*, the very first *Fighting Fantasy* book. Author Jamie Wallis provides a word-for-word translation of Warlock's events (it's essentially a big dungeon crawl), even going so far as to convert the extremely annoying Maze of Zagor, which features the 80s-era necessity "impossible maze with teleport squares." That part's not fun in either the original book or the new adventure, but the rest of it is pure gold. The adventure works best (and arguably only) with a single player, which accurately models the original book. If you've got a young roleplayer or would-be roleplayer, either incarnation of *The Warlock of Firetop Mountain* (the book's once again in print at last) is a good "free taste" to get them hooked for life.

We're interested to hear if adventure gamebooks played a role in your love of roleplaying. Drop us a line at dungeon@paizo.com or polyhedron@paizo.com to let us know what hooked you.

See you in 30,

ERIK



Dungeon

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Bugged Off

I have to express my irritation about the new form of *DUNGEON Magazine*. The adventure content has been halved. In issue #98 there was one adventure and two Side Treks, taking up 45 pages. For comparison, issue #93 had 3 adventures and one Side Trek in 88 pages. Not only that but the one full-length adventure is part of a campaign which to me defeats the purpose of the magazine, both in its aim to provide a range of versatile adventures for DMs and a forum for new writers.

If I were being pessimistic I would say that the material has been neatly halved in size so the magazine can go monthly. This appears to achieve nothing apart from doubling the cost per adventure. If it continues like this I can't justify buying the magazine, and I'm sure others feel the same way.

Jonathan Roberts

Via Email

Disturbing Trends

Many of the recent changes to *DUNGEON Magazine* are disturbing me. Since Paizo has taken over *DUNGEON*, you have increased both the cover and subscription price. It is true that you have gone monthly, but after going monthly you have shrunk the magazine quite considerably. There are fewer adventures, more ads, less content, and all for twice the money.

If I were not trying to be polite I would call you a rip-off. *[Thanks for being polite, Tim!—Erik]*

In the recent past, just before your company "took over," *DUNGEON Magazine* had a \$5.99 cover price and contained three adventures, often with one or more Side Trek adventures.

It is true that the price increased with the addition of *POLYHEDRON* to the magazine, but at that point we were receiving two magazines, not just one.

We were getting *POLYHEDRON* for \$1.00; it was a d20 bargain. You have

shrunk *DUNGEON* to one adventure and the same number of Side Treks for the same price and then doubled the number of magazines. Effectively we get two adventures and four side-treks for roughly \$14.00?

For the first time in ten years I am considering allowing my subscription to run out for both *DRAGON* and *DUNGEON*. You have compromised the value of the magazine and are clearly out to simply soak your magazine subscribers while offering the minimum amount of content. One adventure for \$7.00? The *DUNGEON* customers are used to a little more. I admit that *DUNGEON* offers a "module" for only \$7.00 (and you get *POLYHEDRON*) which would seem to be quite a bargain. In reality, however, you have diluted the magazine and raised the price. In effect you are giving us less for more no matter how you try to put a "spin" on it. I find this unacceptable. Let me humbly request that you return to the regular format of the magazine which included one to three adventures and one to two Side Treks.

I have no problem with a company's desire to make a profit. I do, however, have a problem when you try to make a profit by sacrificing quantity and/or quality. You have done both. It is my sincere wish that you return to the normal format or that you quickly find yourself out of business so that the next company may return *DUNGEON* to its former glory.

If it becomes clear that you will continue in the current format, which increases the price and robs the subscriber or purchaser of content, I will request that the remainder of my subscriptions (both *DUNGEON* and *DRAGON*) be canceled, a refund sent, and I will do my best to urge others in my gaming group, as well as my local game store, to boycott your magazine as well until a change has been made.

It has been my experience that when dealing with companies and egos, the best vote cast (and the only one that seems to be understood) is when the ballot affects a company's pocket book. It is a sad state that this is the only idea which you seem capable of understanding.

Tim McDonald

Via Email

Our publisher answers: While it is true that we raised the cover price and subscription price to DUNGEON/POLYHEDRON, it is neither true that we did it all at once nor that we did it only after it became a Paizo Publication. We raised the cover price while Wizards of the Coast was publishing DUNGEON/POLYHEDRON and we did not immediately raise the subscription price. We hoped that the higher prices would guarantee the survival of the magazine.

When we became Paizo, we looked at what was happening and realized that we could not afford to continue publishing the magazine at that price. Even

Getting in Touch with Dungeon/Polyhedron

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Submissions: Interested in writing for the magazine? Download our submission guidelines by visiting the *DUNGEON* homepage at www.paizo.com/dungeon.

though the subscription price increased with the new monthly format, every existing subscriber received an extension of two issues per year remaining on their subscription and subscribers receive a bonus 16-page section in every issue where the majority of content is on the POLYHEDRON side. Yes, we raised the price, but we have hardly gouged our readers.

✓ Quality Checklist

I recently ordered twelve back issues of your magazine, because I started reading *DUNGEON* quite late. Last week (after only five days) the package arrived here in Germany. Thanks for the fast service!

I immediately started browsing through the mags and had a great 4 hours! I also read in the letters section that you like to get some feedback on your issues—well, here it is!

POLYHEDRON: Even if I'm not a member of the RPGA Network, I think it's a great idea to fuse *DUNGEON* with *POLYHEDRON*. I don't play other d20 games, but the mate-

rial in *POLYHEDRON* is often very useful for me (with a little work the maps and stories fit into my D&D campaign). So, thumbs up for fusing the mags!

The Art: Please never stop printing the cover on the inside! *DUNGEON*'s art is fascinating and useful! My players jump on every handout they receive from me, on which I show one of the pieces of art printed in *DUNGEON* or *DRAGON*. Stephen Daniele's art (cover, #98) is especially cool. I look forward to seeing more adventures with his artwork and cartography.

The Adventure Path: Thanks for the Shattered City campaign! I started reading it yesterday, and together with the Web enhancements this will be a great adventure indeed. I hope the next parts will be as good as the first two!

Negative Things: I know that you don't print *DUNGEON* for me only, so what I don't like is not that important, as long as you keep up the qual-

ity and keep improving on every topic (which you do very well, presently). Keep up your great and wonderful work!

Tom Ganz
Einhausen, Germany

!/? Familiar Riddles

As an off-and-on Dungeon Master for the past twenty years, I have been consistently and increasingly impressed with the content of your publication. Often I read *DUNGEON* simply for the sheer enjoyment of the original adventures within, even knowing I may never have the time to run most adventures in my weekly campaign.

With that said, I was surprised to recognize two riddles in "Quadripartite" [*DUNGEON* #99]. Riddles #2 and #4 are almost word-for-word identical to riddles Gollum tells Bilbo in J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit*. While I am a great fan of Tolkien and appreciate the influence his material has had on D&D, I did not find a citation credit-



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ing the source in Mr. Aperlo's adventure.

While imitation is said to be the sincerest form of complement, surely plagiarism is not.

James Kundart
Nazareth, Pennsylvania

See our corrections sidebar, below.

Polyhedron Praise

I'd like to say I've thoroughly enjoyed *POLYHEDRON* since it was bundled with *DUNGEON*. I love

Enter the Matrix

You've probably already pulled out this issue's bonus feature, our new Combat Matrix, and wondered, "What the heck is this thing?"

The idea behind the Combat Matrix is simple. D&D is pretty complicated, and players frequently lose track of all the effects and abilities at their disposal. The Combat Matrix is meant to serve as a combat round checklist to ensure they don't forget to add that +1 morale bonus to attacks and damage from the bard's inspire courage (as well as the +2 bonus to saves against fear) or that they have the Improved Trip feat.

To use the matrix, the player should make a master copy of the card stock version we've provided. Fill in those abilities that the character always has access to (feats like Power Attack and abilities from continuous magic items are good examples). When the character receives a beneficial effect from some other source (like a *bull's strength* spell), fill in the effect in the boxes where it would have a relevant impact. In the case of *bull's strength*, this would include the Abilities, Attacks, and Skills boxes.

On the flip side of the sheet is the Monster Matrix. Here all you DMs can make a quick reference sheet of monsters in an encounter, including any relevant statistics. Hopefully this will reduce the need to photocopy pages of the *Monster Manual*.

the idea of Mini-Games, and I get great pleasure from looking at the different kinds of universes that you produce.

That being said, I'd like to say I've had my fill of "modern" settings for the time being. There was the Buffy-style game, the mecha game, the Cannonball Run game, the WWII game, and now the bubblegum band game (I've probably missed a few, but please don't be offended). That's a pretty good run, I figure, but I look forward to some more fantasy-grounded Mini-Games.

Don't get me wrong, I always appreciate the new material. Even if it isn't something I plan to use, it still makes for good reading. But I'm longing for another Mini-Game that takes a new spin on the classical D&D theme. The *SPELLJAMMER: Shadow of the Spider Moon* game, for example, was a truly memorable one. How about exploring some of the alternate worlds that your staffers proposed to Wizards during the Fantasy Setting Search? I'm sure there must be some wildly innovative material to be mined.

In any case, keep up the good work. I look forward to what's coming.

Kent Ertman
Via Email

We hope last issue's Knights of the Lich-Queen was enough to sate your fantasy appetite, but just in case it wasn't, flip to the POLYHEDRON side for Iron Lords of Jupiter, a science fantasy Mini-Game that should be up your alley. Every year we'll do at least one or two fantasy games, and we have some exciting plans for the future—Erik Mona

Star Wars Mapquest

I was re-reading my issue 157 of *POLYHEDRON* in preparation of a *Star Wars* game, and it struck me that the map on page 16 of issue #157 is different

from that published in *Star Wars Gamer* #5—indeed it seems to have more detail. So what I was wondering was this: Is the map in *POLYHEDRON* available either as a download or for purchase?

Nick Lowson
Via Email

P.S.: I loved the Wayfarer ship. I would love more of those!

Ask and you shall receive, Nick. Next issue (and every "even" issue thereafter for the foreseeable future) will feature a Starship of the Galaxy column featuring maps and text from none other than our cartographical champion Christopher West. Chris has been busy creating a fleet of Star Wars ships for us, and we can't wait to let you see them!—Erik Mona

Oops!

On the rare (ahem!) occasion we make a mistake in print, we try to make amends. With that in mind, we'd like to correct a pair of errors from issue #99.

First, the Critical Threat Phyx (the assassin choker) was incorrectly attributed to Scott Peterson. The author was actually Seth Spencer. Kudos to Scott for being the first person to point out the mistake. Apologies to both fine authors.

The second mistake was in failing to properly credit the source of some of the riddles in "Quadripartite." As many readers have pointed out (see above), some of the riddles from the adventure were from J.R.R. Tolkien's "The Hobbit." We mistakenly failed to give credit where it was due, and we apologize. The author was in no way to blame for the error, and we hope none of our readership holds the error against an otherwise excellent adventure.





PRISON OF THE FIREBRINGER

BY RICHARD BAKER

ARTWORK BY GREG STAPLES & PETER BERGTING • CARTOGRAPHY BY CRAIG ZIPSE

"Prison of the Firebringer" is a D&D adventure suitable for four 13th-level characters. The characters should advance to 14th level by the climactic scene of the adventure, and they could even reach 15th level if they succeed in reaching their ultimate objective. Consult the "Scaling the Adventure" sidebar for ways to modify the scenario for higher or lower levels of play.

This adventure is set in the *FORGOTTEN REALMS Campaign Setting*, but it can be adapted easily for use in any campaign world. *Prison of the Firebringer* is set in the western portion of the Silver Marches. However, you could place Selskar Vale and the Acolytes of the Flame in any region that contains a long-ruined citadel. The adventuring party should include at least one sorcerer or wizard.

BACKGROUND

In the Year of Oaths Forsaken (626 DR), a cabal of wizards cast out from Netheril formed an arcane college in the pristine wilderness of the ancient North. Known as the Selskar Order, the cabal took over a ruined dwarven stronghold named Andalbruin in the foothills of the Frost Hills. The Netherese built a village atop the ruins, centered on a school of wizardry, which they called Selskartur, the Tower of the Star. The Selskaryn claimed to be neutral in the affairs of the world, but in truth they were ambitious and haughty.

In time, the Selskar Order might have become yet another wizard-ruled tyranny in western Faerûn and gone the way of Athalantar or Illusk. But fate intervened in the form of Harska Thaug, the Render of Thrones—a troll warlord who had united the savage humanoids of the North into a bloodthirsty raiding horde. In the Year of Rumbling Earth (585 DR), Harska Thaug led his horde south from the Spine of the World against the elves of Rilithar, a remnant of ancient Illefarn that lay on the eastern slopes of the Sword Mountains. The town of Andalbruin stood directly in the troll lord's path.

The Ar-Magus Ilviroon, then leader of the Selskar order, rallied the school to defend Andalbruin. But although the massed Selskaryn inflicted tremendous damage on Harska Thaug's horde, the shamans and warpriests serving the Render of Thrones blunted many of the magical assaults unleashed from the Tower of the Star. At last, Ilviroon decided to use his mightiest weapon to drive Harska Thaug from the vale. The ar-magus cast a *gate* spell

and summoned the slaad lord Bazim-Gorag, also called the Firebringer, and made a deal with him to burn Harska Thaug's army.

Bazim-Gorag did as the Selskaryn desired, wreaking great slaughter among the trolls and orcs. Harska Thaug and the survivors of his horde fled back to the Spine of the World. But the price the slaad lord demanded for his labor was high, and when the Selskaryn hesitated to pay, he turned on the Tower of the Star, scouring the citadel and slaughtering several of the mages. Angered by the slaad lord's rebellion, Ilviroon resolved to break Bazim-Gorag to his will. The ar-magus enticed the slaad into a devious trap, then worked a mighty *binding* spell in cooperation with a few other survivors to imprison him in the deep vaults of the tower. The ar-magus created a relatively simple set of conditions, which he named the rite of unbinding, for the slaad's freedom. But he did not share the details of this ritual with anyone, fearing that an ambitious underling might turn Bazim-Gorag against him.

Decimated by the onslaught of the trolls and the battle with the slaad lord, the Selskaryn struggled to rebuild. But the following winter, Harska Thaug returned with an even greater horde. The Ar-Magus Ilviroon fell in battle before he could coerce Bazim-Gorag to aid the cabal against the trolls and orcs a second time. The Tower of the Star fell, and the Selskar Order was no more. Harska Thaug's horde continued south, overrunning the Fair Folk of Rilithar two years later.

In the centuries since the fall of the tower, many adventurers have explored the upper levels of the Selskaryn citadel, which is now known as the Dungeon of the Ruins. Seventeen years ago, one such group, the Company of the Riven Orb, succeeded in unearthing (but not opening) Bazim-Gorag's vault, before falling prey to a beholder named Orichalxos who laired elsewhere in the ruins of Andalbruin. With the path to his prison finally cleared, the clever slaad lord has since lured dozens of evil beings into his service. Calling themselves the Acolytes of the Hidden Flame, these cultists have worked diligently this past decade to complete the rite of unbinding and free Bazim-Gorag.

Knowledge of the rite of unbinding was lost with Ilviroon's death. A few months ago, however, a new devotee of the Acolytes—a durzagon wizard named Durzhul—completed a *legend lore* spell that revealed the necessary steps. (See the "Rite of Unbinding" sidebar.) Under Durzhul's guidance, the Acolytes recovered the *scepter of the ar-magus* from Ilviroon's crypt and



painstakingly recreated the exact words needed to free their master. Several tendays ago they captured a neutral wizard whom they believe they can coerce into aiding with the rite, but they still lack a lawful one, so they have taken to scouring the nearby countryside for an individual with the proper class and alignment.

Meanwhile, Bazim-Gorag waits. Over the centuries, he has come to hate Faerûn, the realm of his long imprisonment, with a vitriolic ire that can be sated only by a burning the likes of which the North has never seen.

ADVENTURE SUMMARY

The adventure begins with **Part I: The Killers' Trail**, in which the characters come upon the wreckage of a caravan destroyed by raiders. Clearly, a number of people from the caravan were carried off to some unknown fate. If they follow the trail from the scene of the attack or explore the area, the PCs discover that a band of evil cultists has set up camp in the ruins of an old wizards' college known as the Dungeon of the Ruins.

In **Part II: Selskar Vale**, the characters confront the followers of Bazim-Gorag, who call themselves the Acolytes of the Hidden Flame. The Acolytes have been scouring the nearby countryside in search of a lawful wizard who can be compelled to take part in

the rite of unbinding. The neutral wizard they captured a while ago has been offered his life in exchange for his participation in the ritual and will soon agree to these terms. Durzhul does not entertain much hope of kidnapping a lawful wizard via random caravan raids, but he believes that sooner or later the trading costers will hire mercenaries or adventurers to put a stop to the raiding, and he plans to ambush any such would-be heroes.

In **Part III: The Dungeon of the Ruins**, the heroes continue their battle against Bazim-Gorag's fanatical minions amid the magic-tortured ruins of the Tower of the Star. Once the cultists are defeated, the PCs can enter the black heart of the dungeons beneath the Selskaryn citadel, where the prison of Bazim-Gorag lies.

In **Part IV: The Prison**, the heroes must enter Bazim-Gorag's lair and defeat him. But the wily slaad lord now knows what must be done to gain his freedom, and he tries to convince the heroes to complete the ritual themselves once they arrive.

FOR THE PLAYERS

The adventure background provided assumes that the player characters are traveling from Nesmé to Silverymoon. Their path skirts the north edge of the Evermoors, where they pick up the killers' trail (see **Part I**, below).

THE RITE OF UNBINDING

Ilviroon made his *binding* spell stronger by specifying a rite of unbinding—a specific set of conditions that must be met to set Bazim-Gorag free. These conditions are as follows.

1. Three wizards—one chaotic, one neutral, and one lawful—must perform the rite.
2. The Rite must be performed in area **29** of the tower (the Chamber of Binding).
3. Each participant in turn must recite a specific set of arcane phrases and invocations in Loross, the ancient language of High Netheril. The Acolytes have divined the necessary wording.
4. One of the three wizards must hold the *scepter of the ar-*

magus. The Acolytes found the scepter in Ilviroon's crypt a couple of years ago, but it now resides in Bazim-Gorag's lair because the slaad lord does not want it lost again.

5. All three wizards must cast *dismissal* at the end of the rite. (This condition prevents the Acolytes from pressing just any lawful wizard into service.)

The freeing of the Firebringer can be delayed indefinitely in two ways. Destroying the scepter or making area **29** completely inaccessible would prevent completion of the rite until those conditions were corrected. (Creating a new scepter with the same characteristics as the original would suffice for the rite, although the Acolytes do not know that.)

Alternatively, you can create a different reason for the characters to be in the area. Use one of the suggestions below, or adapt one to suit your purposes. Whichever option you choose should place the characters at area **K1**.

- The PCs have been hired by a merchant in Silverymoon to find out what happened to a missing caravan. Retracing the caravan's route, the PCs discover its remains.
- The PCs intend to explore the Dungeon of the Ruins, a site known to adventurers across the North. On the way there, they find the remains of a caravan.

PART I: THE KILLERS' TRAIL

Raiding parties of Acolytes have been watching the Nesmé-Silverymoon track for several tendays. In this section of the adventure, the heroes come across some of their foul handiwork and quite possibly blunder into an ambush themselves. Refer to the map of the Surbrin Way.

The adventure begins when the characters come upon the result of the Acolytes' most recent atrocity, a brutal attack against a caravan bound for Silverymoon.

K1. THE BURNED WAGONS

This encounter occurs at area **K1** as the heroes travel east along the Surbrin Way.

The land here is wild and unsettled—a cold and forbidding region of snow-mantled hilltops, mist-wreathed pine forests,

and icy, rushing streams. From time to time, you pass the crumbling ruins of long-abandoned farmsteads and keeps.

Your journey has been uneventful, but upon reaching the top of a small rise, you detect the smell of smoke. At the bottom of the forested hillside lie four charred, black hulks—the remains of large, burned wagons. The burnt corpses of oxen still lie in their harnesses. Lying amid the goods and gear littering the scene are several bodies, some blackened and charred.

The burned wagons belonged to a company called the Three Shields Coster based in Silverymoon. Carrying bolts of Tethyrian brocade and casks of Tashalan wine, the caravan was bound from Nesmé to Silverymoon along the Surbrin Way. An adventuring company known as the Singing Blades was acting as escort. One day ago, the caravan was ambushed by a party of Acolytes of the Hidden Flame in search of a lawful wizard.

Development: If the heroes investigate and attempt to piece together the events leading up to the ambush, they can find a number of significant clues. Exactly what they discover depends on what they do.

Look Around: Any character surveying the picked-over loot notices a strange-looking staff lying on the ground amid the burned goods and gear. cursory inspection reveals that the staff is made of oak and bound with iron. Closer examination reveals a crossed-loop mage's sigil emblazoned near the staff's head, along with several splatters of blood. This *staff of fire* belonged to Serrila Destare, the wizard associated with the Singing Blades. She emptied it of charges during the company's last stand against the Acolytes, who simply discarded the now-useless device when they left.

SCALING THE ADVENTURE

This adventure is designed for four 13th-level PCs. You can also run it with a smaller group of higher-level or a larger group of lower-level characters. Alternatively, you can modify the adventure for groups of four higher- or lower-level PCs by following the guidelines below.

10th- to 12th-level PCs: A party at this level can meet most of the challenges of this adventure, but the following modifications should be made.

- **Part II, area 2 (The Observatory):** Reduce the number of Claws from three to two. Make Orichalxos a standard beholder instead of a 3rd-level beholder mage.
- **Part II, area 3 (The Barracks House):** Remove the half-fiend template from Moskogg.
- **Part III, area 2 (The Gatehouse):** Reduce the number of fomori-ans from three to two.
- **Part III, area 16 (The Alchemist's Croft):** Change Durzhul from a durzagon to a duergar.
- **Part III, area 18 (The Close of Stars):** Change Nemehl from a ghost Wiz15 to a ghost Wiz12.
- **Part III, area 20 (The Conjury):** Change the deathbringer to a stone golem.
- **Part III, area 24 (The Lair of the High Conflagration):** Change Jendar Tholm from an advanced death slaad to a standard death slaad.
- **Part IV, area 30 (The Beast of Nine Flames):** Place the *scepter of the ar-magus* on a small island in the lava moat so that the heroes can recover it after defeating the Beast of Nine Flames.

Bazim-Gorag is simply too deadly for characters of this level to defeat in his prison. A 10th- to 12th-level party should be content with simply driving the Acolytes away from the Dungeon of the Ruins and capturing or destroying the *scepter of the ar-magus*. Presenting the mission in this way allows you to skip the deadliest encounter without depriving the players of a sense of completion, since success means that Bazim-Gorag's release will be delayed for some years.

14th- to 16th-level PCs: This adventure should prove reasonably challenging to higher-level parties as written, particularly the climactic battle against Bazim-Gorag. If desired, however, you can increase the challenge even more by making the following changes.

- **Acolyte Soldiers:** Change from Ftr4 to chaond Clr7.
- **Selskar Watchghosts:** Change from Ftr8 to Ftr10.
- **Part II, area 3 (The Barracks House):** Change Moskogg from a Clr9 to a Clr11.
- **Part III, area 2 (The Gatehouse):** Add two levels of rogue to each of the fomori-ans.
- **Part III, area 15 (The Lower Hall):** Change Xorfilstaarg to a 20-HD gray slaad.
- **Part III, area 16 (Alchemist's Croft):** Change the red slaad to a green slaad.
- **Part IV, area 30 (The Beast of Nine Flames):** Replace the Beast's fiendish template with the half-fiend template.

Bazim-Gorag should still be an appropriate challenge even for PCs at this level, although you may want to allow the slaad lord the benefit of automatically anticipating their attack.

Detect Magic: No residual magic from the battle of the day before remains in the vicinity, and the Acolytes have carried off the magical equipment left on the corpses of the Singing Blades.

Examine the Bodies: A successful Heal check (DC 20) reveals that the bodies are about a day old. Any character who takes a close look at a body can easily determine the cause of death (no check required). Likewise, it's clear that the corpses of the adventurers have been looted. The bodies are as follows:

- Four humans in hauberks of melted mail lie near two of the wagons. Both were burned to death. (These corpses were the caravan guards, each a N human War3.)
- A female human wearing the sky-blue robes of a cleric of Mystra lies near the third wagon. She was killed by a great crushing blow that crumpled her shield. (This lady was Nelissa Starcloak, a NG female human Clr7 of Mystra and one of the Singing Blades.)
- A male dwarf lies half-crumpled over the side of the fourth wagon. He was killed by several arrows. (Bolgodd Stoneshield, a LG male shield dwarf Ftr5, was also a member of the Singing Blades.)
- A male halfling lies on the ground near the rear of the second wagon, with a broken crossbow nearby. He was killed by a swordcut. (This was Jerrol Bramblerun, a CG male lightfoot halfling Rog6 who also a member of the Singing Blades.)

Examine the Wagons: Any character who looks closely at the wagons automatically notices that they had not been emptied of their contents before being set ablaze. Most of the cargo has been destroyed, but enough remains to show that the raiders' goal could not have been simply plunder.

A successful DC 20 Search check reveals a charred emblem—three shields arranged in a triangle—painted on the side of each wagon. A successful DC 25 Knowledge (local) check identifies the symbols as that of the Three Shields Coster of Silvermoon.

Search for Tracks: There are two separate sets of tracks in the area: those made by the caravan and those made by the Acolytes. The tracks made by the caravan are more obvious, since it was not trying to hide evidence of its passage.

Anyone who examines the scene can automatically determine that the Three Shields wagons came from the west, traveling along the road. A more careful study (DC 13 Search) reveals that the wagons were accompanied by several people on foot.

The Acolytes' trail is tougher to find (DC 17 Search) because the raiders took steps to erase signs of their passage. The tracks indicate that attackers charged down the embankment at the north side of the road. When they left, they followed a game trail into the forest, taking what could be several captives with them.

Speak with Dead: The spirits of both the Singing Blades and the caravan guards can recount the circumstances of their final battle. The caravan was proceeding along the road when a *fireball* shot out of the forest, followed by a hail of arrows and boulders. The *fireball* killed the guards outright, so they never saw their slayers. The Singing Blades, however, lasted long enough to know that the attacking party consisted of a half-dozen humans in chainmail and red hoods, a malformed giant, and a

red-robed cleric with numerous fire spells. All the Singing Blades saw their wizard companion subdued, and the halfling lived long enough to see her dragged away by the giant.

Raise Dead: All the characters except the cleric of Mystra are willing to return to life. If *raised*, the guards and Bolgodd the dwarf want no further part of fighting the Acolytes and express a strong desire to head back to Silvermoon. Jerrol the halfling is willing to accompany the party in an effort to track the raiders and rescue the aasimar wizard Serrila, although he believes that she has already met some horrible fate at the hands of the raiders. (If you would rather not add an NPC to the party, just have Jerrol decline to accompany the characters as well.)

If the characters find the Acolytes' trail and decide to follow it, proceed to area **K2**. If they do not follow it, go to area **K3**.

K2. TRAIL OF THE ACOLYTES

The Acolytes marched directly back toward Selskar, intending to deliver the captive wizard Serrila to their comrades. Their trail leads northeast from area **K1**, following old game paths and winding along the hillsides through light pine forest. After about three miles, it joins the Old Selskar Road, then turns north toward Selskar Vale. To follow the trail, a character with the Track feat must succeed at one DC 17 Survival check per mile. Failure indicates that the character has lost the trail.

A character with the Track feat who carefully studies the trail may attempt a Survival check to gather some information about the raiding party. The information gained depends upon the check result, according to the table below.

Survival Check Result	Information Gained
22	The party included one giant-sized humanoid and about a dozen human-sized creatures, all on foot.
27	As above, but several of the smaller creatures were chained together, probably with manacles, and the giant was clubfooted.
32	The party consisted of 1 giant, 5 people in heavy armor, 1 person in no armor, and 6 prisoners in leg irons.
37	The giant left the area carrying about 200 pounds more weight than it was carrying on the way in. The giant's trail begins near an imprint made by the body of a Medium humanoid.

K3. OLD SELSKAR ROAD

The long-abandoned road leading to the Selskar Citadel in the Frost Hills meets the Surbrin Way a couple of miles past the burned wagons. If the heroes miss the trail of the marauders who attacked the Three Shields wagons, they can still find their way to the Dungeon of the Ruins by following the Old Selskar Road.

K3A. OLD AMBUSH SITE

Read or paraphrase the following when the characters reach the intersection of their cart track and the old Selskar Road:

The cart track you have been following joins an old stone road that has obviously fallen into disuse. The old road seems to lead north between the dark borders of the Lurkwood and the grim, snowy heights of the Frost Hills several miles to the north. A circular patch of grass near the intersection of the cart track and the road seems to have been burned black.

About ten days ago, the Acolytes ambushed a pair of wagons from the Silver Blade Coster out of Silverymoon. One of the Acolytes threw a *fireball* spell that singed the grass and destroyed one of the wagons, which the Acolytes dragged away and concealed at a point just south of the road. The raiders captured the other wagon and drove it to Selskar Vale, along with the surviving guards and teamsters from the caravan.

Development: A successful DC 12 Search check reveals a set of tracks leading to a thicket south of the intersection, where the Acolytes dragged the ruined wagon after the attack. Go to area **K3b** if the characters find this trail. A second successful DC 17 Search check reveals another set of wagon tracks leading up the old stone road from the Surbrin Way. Go to area **K3c** if the characters find and follow this trail.

K3B. HIDDEN WAGON

Read or paraphrase the following if the characters discover and follow the trail leading into the underbrush:

About 40 yards south of the intersection, a fire-damaged wagon, apparently dragged here from the road, has been concealed with brush. The wagon's cargo consisted entirely of animal pelts, all of which have been ruined by fire. The emblem of a moon and a sword is painted on the side of the wagon.

A successful DC 25 Knowledge (local) check identifies the emblem as that of the Silver Blade Coster of Silverymoon.

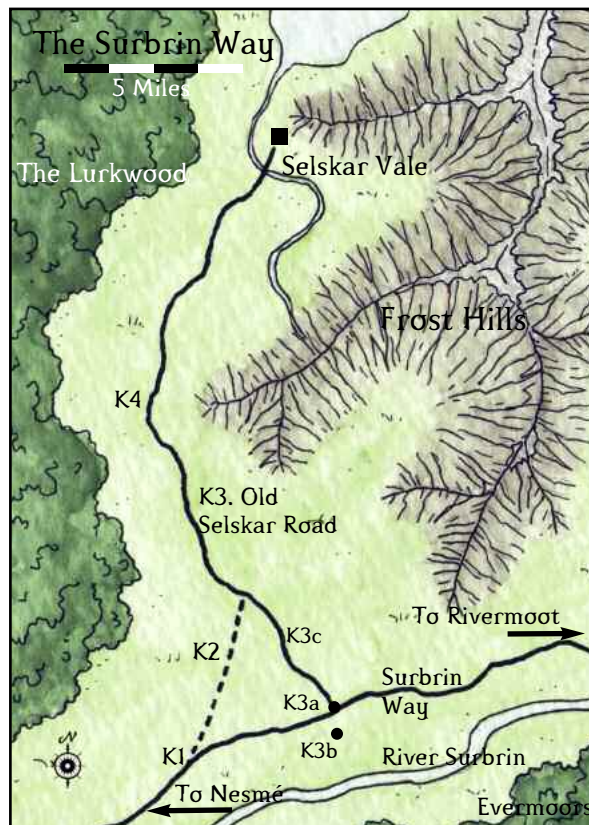
K3C. THE STONE ROAD TRAIL

The Old Selskar Road connecting the Surbrin Way with Selskar Vale is about 16 miles long. The Acolytes' trail from the site of the burned wagons (area **K1**) joins the Old Selskar Road about 4 miles north of its intersection with the cart track. About 6 miles past that, the Acolytes maintain a watchpost. Go to area **K4** if the characters choose to follow this trail.

K4. ACOLYTE AMBUSH

The Acolytes of the Hidden Flame watch the Old Selskar Road continuously for patrols from the Silver Marches or adventurers bound for the Dungeon of the Ruins. They hope to capture the lawful wizard they need for their ritual from such a group.

About 10 miles north of the Surbrin Way, a small band of Bazim-Gorag's minions lurks in a camouflaged camp. The portion of the road where these Acolytes have established their watchpoint winds along a lightly forested hillside. The land slopes steeply down on the west side of the road and equally steeply up on the east side.



K4A. AMBUSH (EL 13)

The Acolytes' actual watchpost is located about 20 feet east of and 20 feet up from the road, in a nest of boulders. Their campsite is hidden some 80 feet away (see area **K4b**, below).

Creatures: Three Acolyte soldiers, a chaond wizard named Osterel, and a palrethee demon keep watch here. Two more Acolyte soldiers rest in the nearby camp (see area **K4b**, below). At night, Osterel is in the camp, resting to regain her spells. Any Acolytes in the camp when a fight begins arrive on the road near the north end of the map 5 rounds later to join the fray.

☛ **Acolyte Soldiers, Male or Female Human Ftr4 (3):** CR 4; Medium Humanoid; HD 4d10+11; hp 33, 31, 27; Init +1; Spd 20 ft. (in breastplate), base 30 ft.; AC 19, touch 11, flat-footed 18; Base Atk +4; Grp +7; Atk +9 melee (1d10+5/19–20, masterwork bastard sword); Full Atk +9 melee (1d10+5/19–20, masterwork bastard sword) or +5 ranged (1d8+3/×3, composite longbow [+3 Str]); AL CE; SV Fort +6, Ref +2, Will +4; Str 16, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 8.

Skills: Climb +5*, Intimidate +4, Listen +3, Ride +6, Spot +6. **Feats:** Alertness, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (bastard sword), Iron Will, Toughness, Weapon Focus (bastard sword), Weapon Specialization (bastard sword).

*Includes –3 armor check penalty.

Possessions: Masterwork breastplate, +1 heavy steel shield, masterwork bastard sword, composite longbow [+3 Str], *potion of haste*, *potion of cure moderate wounds*.

☛ **Osterel, Female Chaond Evo9:** CR 10; Medium Outsider; HD 9d4+27; hp 51; Init +3; Spd 30 ft.; AC 19, touch 13, flat-

footed 16; Base Atk +4; Grp +5; Atk +6 melee (1d4+1/19–20, masterwork dagger); Full Atk +6 melee (1d4+1/19–20, masterwork dagger) or +8 ranged (1d8/19–20, masterwork light crossbow); SA *shatter*; SQ darkvision 60 ft., outsider traits, resistances (acid 5, cold 5, sonic 5); AL CE; SV Fort +8, Ref +8, Will +7; Str 13, Dex 16, Con 16, Int 17, Wis 8, Cha 8.

Skills: Appraise +3 (+5 alchemy), Concentration +15, Craft (alchemy) +9, Escape Artist +5, Hide +6, Knowledge (arcana) +12, Spellcraft +11, Spot +5. *Feats:* Brew Potion, Empower Spell, Greater Spell Focus (Evocation), Scribe Scroll, Spell Focus (Evocation), Spellcasting Prodigy (wizard)*.

*See the FORGOTTEN REALMS Campaign Setting. If you're not running this adventure in the Realms, substitute another feat.

Shatter (Sp): Once per day, Osterel can use *shatter* (caster level 9th; save DC 11).

Wizard Spells Prepared (5/6/6/5/3/2; base save DC = 13 + spell level; 10% arcane spell failure chance): 0—*daze* ×2, *flare**, *light**, *mage hand*; 1st—*charm person*, *color spray*, *expeditious retreat*, *magic missile** ×2, *shield*; 2nd—*invisibility*, *levitate*, *protection from arrows*, *see invisibility*, *scorching ray**; 3rd—*dispel magic*, *displacement*, *fireball** ×2, *protection from energy*; 4th—*charm monster* ×2, *greater invisibility*, *wall of fire**; 5th—*dominate person*, *empowered fireball**.

*Evocation spell. The base save DC for these spells, where applicable, is 15 + spell level. Osterel's prohibited schools are Conjunction and Necromancy.

Spellbook: Osterel's spellbook contains all the spells he has prepared, plus the following: 0—all but *acid splash*, *disrupt undead*, and *touch of fatigue*; 1st—*comprehend languages*, *endure elements*, *identify*, *reduce person*, *sleep*; 2nd—*daze monster*, *detect thoughts*, *knock*; 3rd—*daylight*^{*}, *haste*, *nondetection*; 4th—*arcane eye*, *rainbow pattern*; 5th—*cone of cold*^{*}, *sending*^{*}.

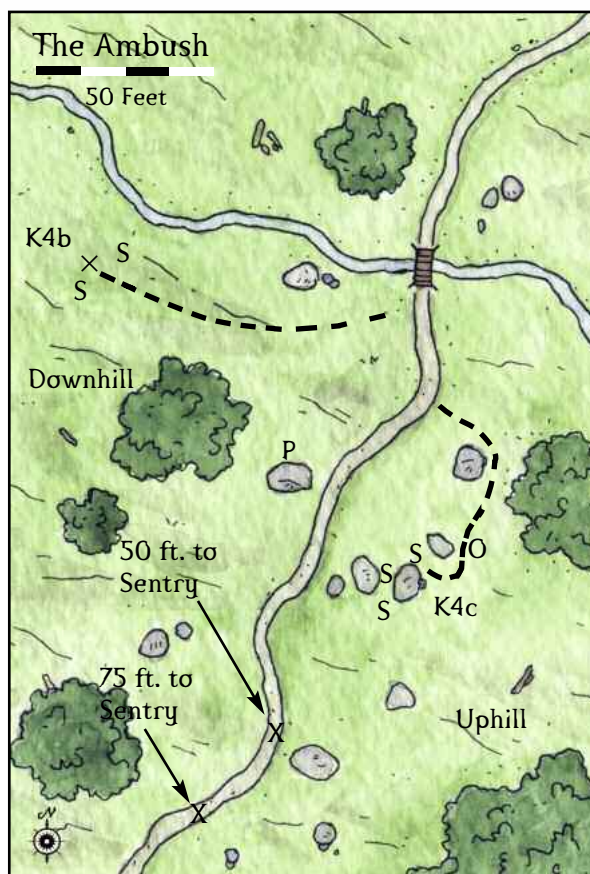
*Evocation spell.

Possessions: +2 mithral shirt, masterwork dagger, masterwork light crossbow, 20 bolts, *cloak of resistance* +2, *wand of fireball* (caster level 8th, 20 charges), 2 *potions of cure moderate wounds*, spell component pouch, belt pouch with 5 pp, 18 gp, 28 sp, and two chrysoberyls (30 gp each).

🔥 **Male Advanced Palrethee:** CR 10; Medium Outsider (chaotic, evil, extraplanar, fire, tanar’ri); HD 10d8+50; hp 95; Init +4; Spd 30 ft.; AC 29, touch 14, flat-footed 25; Base Atk +10; Grp +16; Atk +18 melee (1d8+10 plus 1d6 fire/19–20, +1 *flaming longsword*); Full Atk +16 melee (1d8+6, 2 slams) or +18/+13 melee (1d8+10 plus 1d6 fire/19–20, +1 *flaming longsword*); SA demonic burn, spell-like abilities; SQ darkvision 60 ft., DR 10/good, *fiery shield*, fire subtype, outsider traits, *summon tanar’ri*, tanar’ri traits; SR 18; AL CE; SV Fort +12, Ref +11, Will +9; Str 23, Dex 18, Con 20, Int 13, Wis 14, Cha 11.

Skills: Bluff +13, Diplomacy +17, Hide +17, Intimidate +4, Knowledge (arcana) +12, Listen +15, Search +14, Sense Motive +15, Spellcraft +16, Spot +15. *Feats:* Combat Expertise, Dodge, Mobility, Weapon Focus (longsword).

Demonic Burn (Ex): Any creature hit by the advanced palrethee's slam attack must succeed at a Reflex save (DC 20) or catch fire. The flame burns for 1d4 rounds. A burning creature can take a move-equivalent action to put out the flame.



Spell-Like Abilities: At will—*detect good*, *detect magic*, *see invisibility*; 1/day—*fear* (30-ft. radius). Caster level 10th; save DC 10 + spell level.

Fiery Shield (Sp): The advanced palrethee is wreathed in flames that damage any creature attacking it with natural or hand-held melee weapons. The attacker takes 1d6+10 points of fire damage (spell resistance applies, caster level 10th) each time it hits the demon.

Tanar’ri Traits: The palrethee possesses the following traits:

- Immune to electricity and poison.
- Resistant to acid 10, cold 10, and fire 10)
- *Summon* (Sp): Once per day, an advanced palrethee can attempt to summon a normal palrethee with a 30% chance of success.
- Telepathy 100 feet.

Possessions: +1 chain shirt, +1 flaming longsword.

Tactics: The Acolyte soldiers are hiding 20 feet east of and 20 feet above the road. Osterel is farther uphill, about 50 feet east of and 50 feet above the road. The palrethee lurks on the downhill slope, only 10 feet from the road, but he is completely hidden from view from the south by a large boulder.

Only one of the Acolyte soldiers watches the road at any given time. That sentry is entitled to a Spot check (DC 20; refer to **Table 3-2: Spotting Difficulty** in the *DUNGEON MASTER's Guide* for modifiers based on prevailing conditions) to spot the PCs at 150 feet. If he fails to see the characters at that distance, he automatically spots them when they are 75 feet from the ambush site.

Because the Acolytes are hiding among boulders overlooking the road, approaching characters have a shorter encounter distance than the Acolytes do. Allow each PC to make a Spot check when the party comes within 100 feet of the Acolytes. The DC for this check is 34 (base 25, +5 for stillness, +4 for cover, +0 for the worst Hide modifier of Acolytes' party), but modifiers for other conditions may also apply.

As soon as the sentry detects intruders, the Acolytes duck behind the boulders, which grant them total cover from characters approaching from the south. Once the Acolytes duck down, characters continuing up the road have no chance to see the enemy party until they actually draw abreast of the latter's hiding place.

If the Acolytes spotted the characters before being seen themselves, Osterel casts the following spells on herself, in order, time permitting: *greater invisibility*, *displacement*, and *levitate*. She then begins the battle by hurling a *fireball* at the party, while the advanced palrethee attempts to engage the heroes in melee. If any of the PCs appear to be wizards, the Acolytes avoid targeting those characters with deadly attacks and instead concentrate on slaying the rest of the group, hoping to capture the spellcasters alive.

Any character scrambling up the slope from the road must make a successful DC 5 Climb check to reach the Acolyte soldiers' hiding places. A character going downhill can move normally with a successful DC 15 Balance check; otherwise a successful Climb check at the same DC is needed. Osterel and the Acolyte soldiers each have cover (+4 bonus to AC, +2 bonus on Reflex saves) against attacks from the road below.

When the characters get a good look at the attackers, read or paraphrase the following, adjusting as needed to suit the conditions:

Several human archers crouch behind boulders on the slopes above you, firing double-curved longbows. Each wears a red-hooded cloak over a breastplate emblazoned with a twin-flame emblem. From above and behind them, farther up the slope, a voice croaks out unintelligible words. On the downhill side, a skeletal creature wreathed in blue flame bounds toward you, a sword of flaming bone clenched in its taloned fists. "Remember, spare the wizard!" cries a voice from up the slope.

The archers continue firing their bows as long as possible before dropping them and drawing melee weapons.

Development: These Acolytes are not religious zealots, despite their relationship with Bazim-Gorag, so they are likely to talk if captured. Refer to the "Who Are the Acolytes?" sidebar, below, for details on what each Acolyte knows and how likely any particular one of them is to divulge this information to captors.

K4B. THE CAMP (EL 6)

In the forest, about 80 feet north of the ambush site and 40 feet downhill from it, the Acolytes maintain a small encampment.

Nestled in a hollow on the hillside is a small camp. A crude lean-to covers a sleeping platform made of rough planks that is large enough to accommodate three or four bedrolls. Butchered game hangs from a wooden rack between two trees, and a carefully banked campfire smolders at one end of the shelter.

Any Acolytes here when the party arrives have weapons close at hand but are not wearing their armor. The five soldiers in this

WHO ARE THE ACOLYTES?

Bazim-Gorag has gathered together a cult of almost fifty ruthless brigands, mercenaries, and monsters. Most are former bandits, but the others are either evil adventurers drawn to the power of the slaad lord or unbalanced worshipers of chaos and destruction who dream of harnessing Bazim-Gorag's might for their own ends.

Acolyte Soldiers (Human Ftr4): Most of the footsoldiers of the cult are brigands who are not very loyal to the cause.

Monsters: Several monsters have joined the Acolytes, including a trio of fomorian giants and several slaadi. The giants and low-ranking slaadi are simply muscle, but Dregadzel (the gray slaad) and Jendar Tholm (the death slaad) are among the cult leaders.

Leaders: The leaders of the Acolytes include arcane spellcasters, flame lords (high officers), and the High Conflagration, who is second only to Bazim-Gorag in importance. Their names and specific ranks are as follows.

Osterel (Female Chaond Evo9): Osterel commands the outpost on the Selskar Road (Part I, area K4).

Varra (Female Human Clr10 of Talos): Varra is Moskogg's Lieutenant and resides in the barracks house (Part II, area V3).

Dregadzel (Female Gray Slaad): Dregadzel acts as Moskogg's advisor and resides in the barracks house (Part II, area V3).

Flame Lord Moskogg (Male Half-Fiend Half-Minotaur Clr9 of Kossuth): Moskogg oversees Acolyte raiding efforts and functions as commander of the barracks house (Part II, area V3).

Flame Lord Durzhul (Male Durzagon Wiz13): Durzhul is the

chief spellcaster of the Acolytes and the leader of the efforts to free Bazim-Gorag (Part III, area D16).

High Conflagration Jendar Tholm (Advanced Death Slaad): Jendar is the head of the Acolytes and the principal organizer of the cult (Part III, area D24).

ACOLYTE KNOWLEDGE

All Acolytes know the leaders listed above and can describe in general terms the layout of Selskar Vale and the location of the Acolyte strongpoints, although few of the rank-and-file Acolytes have actually descended into the dungeons beneath the Tower of the Star. Each also knows the following pieces of information, which the rank-and-file members give out without serious coercion, but the leaders attempt to keep to themselves.

- They are members of a secret society called the Hidden Flame. This organization serves a powerful chaos lord, who is imprisoned somewhere beneath the old wizards' keep in Selskar Vale.
- The leaders of this society are working to free the chaos lord.
- To accomplish this goal, some kind of rite must be performed that requires the presence of several wizards.
- The leaders of the Hidden Flame attempt to abduct anyone with magical talent in the hope that the rite can be completed with a captive wizard.
- The chaos lord has promised great rewards for the Acolytes' aid. These rewards will probably come in the form of shares of a fabled hoard kept somewhere within the lord's prison.

Acolyte contingent rotate duty: three stand watch on the road while the other two rest. At night, each Acolyte in the campsite has a 60% chance to be asleep.

Creatures: Two of the five Acolyte soldiers stationed to watch this section of road are off-duty at any given time, and Osterel rests here at night.

☙ **Acolyte Soldiers (2):** hp 32, 35; see area **K4a**.

Tactics: These Acolytes are not expecting an attack on the camp; they assume that their fellows at the watchpost can detect enemies. Thus, they fight only to defend themselves. Osterel, if present, first casts *greater invisibility* before employing the rest of her spells.

Development: See area **K4a**, above.

Treasure: Osterel's spellbooks are wrapped in oiled cloth and secured in a leather satchel that lies beneath one of the bedrolls.

PART II: SELSKAR VALE

At the end of the Old Selskar Road lies Selskar Vale, once home not only to the Tower of the Star but also the village of Andalbruin. The vale is better known today as the site of the Dungeon of the Ruins.

When the PCs reach the end of the Old Selskar Road, read or paraphrase the following:

The old stone road has led you more than 15 miles from the Surbrin Way, winding along the steep foothills of the Frost Hills. To the west lies the impenetrable green Lurkwood; to the east the Frost Hills—the southernmost sentinels of the Spine of the World—rear their snowy heads.

The road crests a pine-covered ridge, and before you spreads a broad, forested vale. Filling the northern part of the valley is a cold blue tarn fed by a swift, rushing stream that spills down from the snowy slopes to the right. Dominating the center of the vale is a bare, steep hill crowned by a ruined fortress, and among the woods at its base lie a number of small, ruined buildings. Apparently a town of some size stood here long ago, but now the place seems abandoned. The road descends into the forested valley.

Most of the vale is lightly forested, although the upper slopes of the tower's hill are barren and rocky. The Acolytes are not in the habit of patrolling the vale, but small parties of hunters and foragers from the group periodically wander throughout the area.

VI. THE VALE ROAD

In a small clearing of recently cut timber alongside the road lie the charred remnants of what must have been a great bonfire. The whole place reeks of smoke and a more nauseating smell—burned flesh. A single black tree trunk rises from the center of the cold ash, with a blackened, skeletal figure still chained to it. Someone was burned at the stake here, probably within the last couple of days. The skeleton faces down toward the valley below and is clearly visible over the trees to the north.

The Acolytes chose to make an example of a woodcutter named Nara (CG female human Com4), who tried to escape.

Development: If questioned by means of *Speak with Dead* or *Raise*, Nara can tell the PCs that she lived about a day's travel west of Rivermoot, a small village about 15 miles east of the Old Selskar Road along the Surbrin Way. She was out cutting timber about three tendays ago when a band of raiders ambushed and captured her.

She was brought to Selskar Vale and imprisoned along with a dozen other unfortunates in the wreckage of an old fortification on the road leading to the old keep. She escaped four days ago but was caught by a patrol of Acolytes not far outside the vale. They brought her here and began cutting timber for a bonfire. Meanwhile, other Acolytes, including one of the giants, marched the remaining captives to the clearing. When everything was ready, the Acolytes burned Nara at the stake, forcing the other prisoners to watch as a lesson against attempting to escape.

Any character who searches the clearing may attempt a Survival check (DC 6). Success reveals the tracks of about two dozen people within and around the clearing. A number of them were chained at the ankles, and at least one of the unchained ones was a clubfooted giant.

V2. THE OBSERVATORY

Long before the Acolytes appeared on the scene, Selskar Vale was haunted by Orichalxos, a beholder mage. This creature appropriated the ruins of the Selskar Order's observatory for its lair decades ago and began to study bizarre arcane phenomena.

The beholder is now served by the Claws of Orichalxos, a trio of exceptional gargoyles. The beholder mage has reached an understanding with the Acolytes—it ignores them as long as they stay away from its observatory.

Read or paraphrase the following when the PCs come within sight of the observatory:

Within a bend of the stream rises a low hill, crowned by the ruins of a domed building. Most of the dome has collapsed, leaving a jagged roofline above thick octagonal walls. The structure is made of polished white stone that is now covered with a thick patina of dirt and climbing ivy. Ancient designs of moons and stars line the upper portions of the outer walls, interspersed with narrow, slitlike windows. A pair of massive, green bronze doors marks the main entrance, which is accessible via a short flight of steps to either side of a landing protected by a wall.

The Claws normally lurk atop the astrolabe (area **V2b**), which provides an excellent view of the ground floor (area **V2a**). Orichalxos usually remains in the orrery (area **V2d**), which serves as its laboratory.

Since all the residents of the observatory can fly, the ground floor entrances are rarely used. Orichalxos and the Claws normally enter and leave the observatory through the gaping opening of the shattered dome.

The main door (the double door to the west) is not locked, but the doors are heavy and stuck. Attempts to force these doors make a lot of noise, which alerts the Claws to prepare an ambush in area **V2a**. The rear door (the single door to the east) is locked (Open Lock DC 30) but neither stuck nor blocked.

❖ **Stuck Bronze Doors:** 2 in. thick; Hardness 10; 60 hp; break DC 22.

V2A. THE GROUND FLOOR (EL 14)

The Claws defend this room against any intrusion.

A magnificent dome once crowned this building, but it collapsed long ago, leaving the interior open to the sky. Heaps of rubble lie here and there. In the center of the building, a large platform rises 10 feet above the floor, supported by thick columns. Steep, narrow stairs lead from the floor up to the platform, and slender balconies accessible via other flights of stairs run along the north and south walls. Some sort of pedestal or mount stands atop the platform, although it is somewhat concealed from a viewer on the lower floor.

Debris on the floor makes it difficult to move fast on the ground. Any character attempting to run or charge in this room must make a successful DC 15 Balance check or fall prone.

Beneath the platform, a small bronze door opens easily to reveal a spiral staircase. These stairs descend to the observatory's foundation level.

Creatures: The Claws lurk atop the platform near the wreckage of the astrolabe (see area **K2b**), but if someone tries to force the main door below, they move up to the western edge of the platform and get ready to rain arrows down upon intruders. They also defend the observatory against flying creatures entering from above.

➤ **Claws of Orichalxos, Male Gargoyle Rog6 (3):** CR 10; Medium Monstrous Humanoid (earth); HD 4d8+20 plus 6d6+30; hp 100, 94, 81; Init +8; Spd 45 ft., fly 75 ft. (average); AC 23, touch 14, flat-footed 23; Base Atk +8; Grp +11; Atk +12 melee (1d4+3, claw); Full Atk +12 melee (1d4+3, 2 claws) and +10 melee (1d6+1, bite) and +10 melee (1d6+1, gore) or +11/+6 ranged (1d8+4/×3, masterwork composite longbow [+2 Str] with +2 arrows); SA sneak attack +3d6; SQ darkvision 60 ft., DR 10/magic, evasion, freeze, trap sense +2, trapfinding, uncanny dodge; AL CE; SV Fort +8, Ref +13, Will +5; Str 16, Dex 18, Con 21, Int 8, Wis 8, Cha 6.

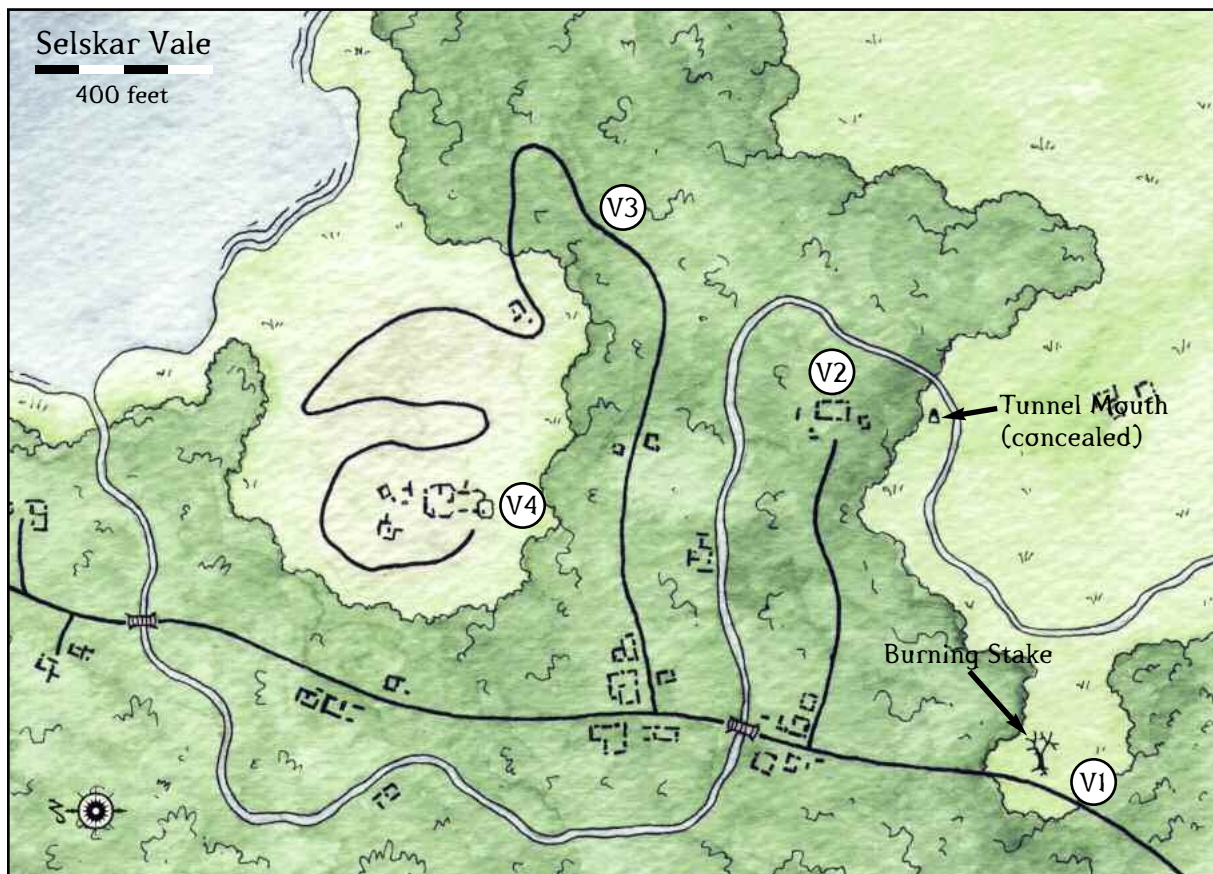
Skills: Balance +11, Hide +21*, Jump +10, Listen +8, Move Silently +11, Open Lock +9, Search +4, Spot +8, Tumble +11. **Feats:** Flyby Attack, Improved Initiative, Multiattack, Weapon Finesse.

*Includes the +8 bonus gargoyles receive when concealed against a background of stone.

See the *Monster Manual* for descriptions of a gargoyle's special abilities.

Possessions: +2 shadow studded leather armor, masterwork composite shortbow [+2 Str] with 20 +2 arrows.

Tactics: If warned of an approaching enemy, two of the Claws prepare to shoot from the platform, while the third drops to the



floor and hides near the door. As soon as the characters enter, it attempts a sneak attack. Once combat begins, all three make use of their flyby attacks and ranged weapons. If any enemies get too far from their fellows, the Claws streak in to attack the lone character as a group. Unless circumstances dictate otherwise, two Claws attack each round, while the third finds a place to hide and set up another sneak attack.

If two Claws fall in battle, the third attempts to reach the stairway under the platform, slip down to the orrery, and warn Orichalxos of the attack. If this tactic proves impossible, the remaining Claw tries to escape through the open dome.

V2B. THE ASTROLABE

In the days of the Selskar Order, a great magical astrolabe stood on this elevated platform. Now the Claws use it as their nest.

A 40-foot-wide platform fills the middle of the old dome. Heaps of rubble clutter the platform's surface. At its center stands the wreckage of a great device—a machine composed of lenses and gears aimed blindly toward the sky. Judging from the three foul nests of uncured hides and the gore-spattered clothing lying atop the platform, some predatory creatures now make their home near the old machine.

If the three gargoyles described in area **V2a** did not notice the approach of the PCs, they can be found here. When the PCs approach, the Claws are idly pawing through sacks of small baubles and copper coins taken from travelers along the Surbrin Way.

Treasure: Orichalxos takes most of the loot the Claws find, but it allows them to keep a small share of their booty. Near each bedroll is a dirty sack stuffed with a Claw's belongings, as follows.

Sack #1: 355 sp, 106 gp, 3 pp, scroll of *divine power* and *neutralize poison*.

Sack #2: 212 sp, 84 gp, 5 pp, small ivory statuette (110 gp).

Sack #3: 188 sp, 101 gp, wand of *cure moderate wounds* (14 charges).

V2C. THE FOUNDATIONS

A small, cramped staircase descends from the pedestal of the astrolabe down to the basement of the observatory.

The stairs descend about 20 feet, eventually opening into a small, subterranean chamber about 30 feet across. A passage to the west leads to a low, vaulted room filled with crates, sacks, and casks. To the east, a larger passage leads to a massive set of bronze double doors. Along the north wall is a small, rusty door made of iron plate.

Orichalxos makes its lair in the orrery (area **V2d**), which lies beyond the double doors. The iron door leading to area **V2e** is rusted shut. The bronze doors leading to area **V2d** open easily.

❖ **Rusted Iron Door:** 1/2 in. thick; Hardness 10; 15 hp; break DC 15.

Trap: To prevent any unpleasant surprises, Orichalxos maintains an *alarm* spell (the silent mental version) on the archway

between the stairwell and the eastern arm of the foundation. Orichalxos has taught the Claws the password so that they can avoid setting off the *alarm*.

➤ **Alarm Trap:** CR —; magic device; proximity trigger (*alarm*); automatic reset; spell effect (*alarm*, caster level 1st); Search DC 26; Disable Device DC 26.

V2D. THE ORRERY (EL 16)

This chamber is now the beholder mage's lair. Read or paraphrase the following when the PCs enter, adjusting as needed if Orichalxos was not warned by the *alarm* and is therefore visible.

The bronze doors open into a large but cluttered room, perhaps 50 feet long and 40 feet wide. In the center of the chamber stands a great machine made of tarnished brass and rusted iron. It consists of several globes suspended from long arms that revolve slowly around the center of the device. Along the walls are crude workbenches and shelves piled high with musty old tomes and parchments covered with arcane scrawlings. The air smells of some strange incense.

Creature: Orichalxos uses this chamber as its lair and research center. If forewarned by the *alarm* spell, the beholder mage begins the encounter invisible, lurking behind the orrery, which grants it partial cover (+2 bonus to AC) from enemies near the door to its chamber. Orichalxos also gains a +4 circumstance bonus on any Hide checks it makes in the vicinity of the orrery, since the machine consists of large globes that resemble the beholder's body.

Orichalxos expects that sooner or later the Acolytes of the Hidden Flame will attempt to storm its lair, so the arrival of a potentially hostile party of adventurers does not surprise it greatly. However, it also recognizes the possibility that someone other than the Acolytes could arrive by accident, and that such a meeting might provide an opportunity to rid it of the Acolytes altogether.

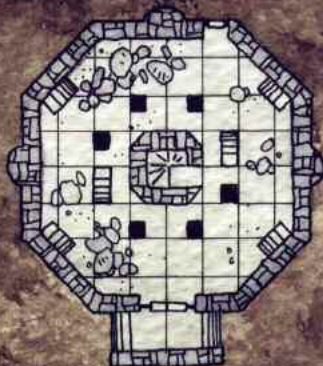
➤ **Orichalxos, Beholder Mage3:** CR 16; Large Aberration; HD 11d8+33 plus 3d4+9; hp 98; Init +5; Spd 5 ft., fly 20 ft. (good); AC 12, touch 12, flat-footed 11; Base Atk +9; Grp +13; Atk +10 ranged touch (spell effect, 6 eye rays); Full Atk +9 melee (2d4, bite) and +10 ranged touch (spell effect, 6 eye rays); Space/Reach 10 ft./5 ft.; SA eye rays; SQ all-around vision, dark-vision 60 ft., flight; AL LE; SV Fort +10, Ref +8, Will +16; Str 10, Dex 12, Con 16, Int 21, Wis 12, Cha 17.

Skills: Concentration +10, Decipher Script +12, Hide +11, Knowledge (arcana) +19, Listen +17, Search +23, Spellcraft +14, Spot +21. **Feats:** Alertness, Combat Casting, Flyby Attack, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Scribe Scroll, Shot On The Run.

Eye Rays (Su): Six of Orichalxos's small eyes can produce a magical ray (range 150 ft.; save DC 19) once per round, even when the beholder mage is attacking physically or moving at full speed. It can aim only three eye rays or spell-stalks at a target in any one 90-degree arc. Orichalxos still has his eye rays of *charm monster*, *disintegrate*, *fear*, *finger of death*, *slow*, and *telekinesis*. The other four eye stalks cast 0, 1st-, 2nd-, and 3rd-level spells, respectively.

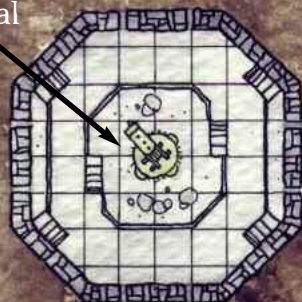
The Observatory

1 square = 5 feet

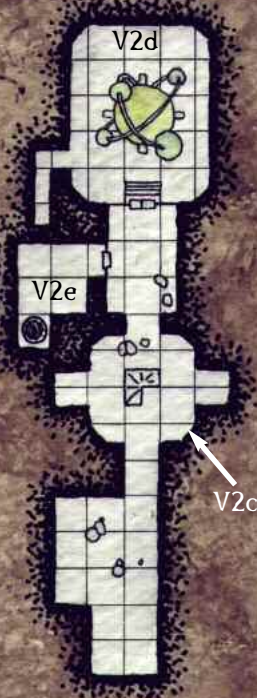


V2a. Ground Floor

Pedestal



V2b. Astrolabe



V2c

V2e

V2d

See the *Monster Manual* for descriptions of beholder special abilities.

Wizard Spells Prepared (6/8/6/4; base save DC = 15 + spell level; caster level 14th): 0—daze, detect magic ×2, mage hand ×2, read magic; 1st—alarm, identify, mage armor, magic missile ×2, shield, true strike ×2; 2nd—detect thoughts, invisibility ×2, mirror image, protection from arrows, see invisibility; 3rd—clairaudience/clairvoyance, displacement, lightning bolt, ray of exhaustion.

Spellbooks: Orichalxos's spellbooks contain all the spells he has prepared, plus the following: 0—all; 1st—detect secret doors, endure elements, erase, silent image; 2nd—blur, cat's grace, knock, scorching ray, touch of idiocy, web; 3rd—dispel magic, haste, major image, suggestion.

Possessions: +2 ring of protection, +3 ring of resistance (as cloak), brooch of shielding (65 points remaining), spellbooks.

Negotiations: If warned by the alarm spell, Orichalxos casts invisibility, see invisibility, shield, and protection from arrows, in that order. When intruders enter the room, it waits to determine their intentions. It does not offer to parley, but it is willing to do

so if the characters make such an offer. In that case, the beholder mage tries to make any deal it can that points the PCs straight at the Acolytes, and it even offers to pay them well if they can drive the adherents of the Hidden Flame out of the vale. (Of course, it does not intend to honor such a bargain, but it figures that a direct conflict with the Acolytes will kill or weaken the PCs, after which any survivors will be in no position to make demands.)

Tactics: If the PCs extend no offer to negotiate and simply begin looting or damaging items in the orrery, Orichalxos unleashes a murderous barrage of eye rays and spells.

Orichalxos can direct any three eyestalks in a single 90-degree arc each round. The beholder mage can protect itself with defensive spells regardless of which direction the spellcasting eyestalk is facing, so it often attacks with a combination of three eye rays or attack spells and then uses its remaining spell-stalks for personal spells such as invisibility, shield, or mirror image.

The beholder mage tries to save a good defensive spell to cover its escape. If reduced to one-third of its normal hit points, it tries

THE FALL OF THE TOWER OF THE STAR

This old tome was written by a wizard named Vandar Nightshade, a member of the Selskar Order who survived the destruction of the cabal. Before he died, he took the time to document the events of that day for posterity. The book is written in Thorass (Old Common; Decipher Script DC 20).

Any character who can read the book and takes an hour to

peruse it in depth learns the general course of events described in the "Background" section, up to the paragraph that begins, "In the centuries since the fall of the Tower. . . ."

Orichalxos has read the book and knows the story well. If the PCs negotiate with the beholder, it is willing to relate the events described in the book.



to flee through the small tunnel to the north. When it reaches the end, it uses either *disintegrate* or *lightning bolt* to cut its way through the wall and then flees down the well shaft in area V2E.

Treasure: In the southeast corner of the room stand two wooden chests. Between them, they contain 2,340 sp; 5,400 gp; 115 pp; and the following gemstones: a deep blue spinel (600 gp), an alexandrite (300 gp), 2 waterstars (120 gp each), 2 peridots (70 gp each), and 3 crowns of silver (12 gp each). One chest also contains a +2 *thundering bastard sword* wrapped in oilcloth. The beholder has little use for this item; it's merely keeping it for use as a bribe in some future negotiation.

The books scattered about the room include Orichalxos's spellbooks and a number of tomes on various arcane topics. The most noteworthy is *The Fall of the Tower of the Star*, a text written in Thorass (Old Common) by one of the Selskar mages.

V2E. WELL ROOM

This room once contained a well that supplied the observatory with water, but it has long since gone dry. After the arrival of the Acolytes, Orichalxos prepared the passage as an escape route.

In the western wall of this room is an alcove containing an old, dry well. The 10-foot-diameter shaft drops down into echoing blackness, although a faint, musty breeze sighs up from below. On one wall, a swinging iron mast still leans out over the opening. Several old wooden buckets and rotten ropes lie on the floor nearby.

The beholder mage *disintegrated* a short passage from the orrery to this room, leaving only a thin layer of masonry at the end of the passage. From the well room, there is no sign of the passage beyond, but Orichalxos can easily *disintegrate* the remaining foot of wall to make use of its escape route.

The well shaft drops almost 100 feet straight down, emerging in a cavern about 30 feet in diameter and 8 feet high that is half-filled with cold, muddy water. From this natural cistern, the beholder mage *disintegrated* another tunnel due south. This second passage opens into thick underbrush near the stream, at the point marked on the map of the orrery.

Development: At first glance, the mast looks like a safe place to secure a rope to rappel down the shaft. But the bolts securing the mast to the wall are so rusty and weak that they immediately give way under more than 150 pounds. A character using a rope attached to the mast to climb down may attempt a Climb check (DC 45, because any rope attached to the mast won't help) to avoid falling. A fall down the entire length of the shaft deals 9d6 points of damage, plus 1d6 points of nonlethal damage.

V3. THE BARRACKS HOUSE

In the days of the Selskar Order, this stronghold of thick stone housed a garrison of soldiers who defended the town. Although its value as a fortification was slight, it also served as a barracks for the Selskaryn's hired men-at-arms. The Acolytes now use the structure as a jail for their captives and a bunkroom for themselves.

The stone road begins to ascend toward a saddle between the barren knoll on which the old keep stands and the forested mountainside across from it. On the east side of the road stand the ruins of an old outwork or barracks house, the upper floors of which have long since collapsed.

Close to this old stone fortification stand two newer structures, their crudely assembled walls made of stone from the ruins. The walls are just high and sturdy enough to anchor lean-tos of rough timber. The new building on the east side of the road houses several trestle tables arranged as though for a dining area. The one to the west looks like a rough but effective jail.

The barracks house is divided into four distinct areas. Area **V3a** is the cooktent, where the Acolytes take their meals. Area **V3b** is the cage, where they keep their captives. Area **V3c** is the ruined guardhouse, which has been reduced to empty walls. Area **V3d** is the Flame Lord's Chapel, where Moskogg makes his lair.

Development: There are plenty of opportunities for the characters to be spotted in this area. Any Acolytes moving within area V3 who recognize the PCs as intruders immediately attack, calling for reinforcements upon realizing that they are outclassed. Thus, the characters could easily find themselves fighting enemies from all quarters in and around the barracks house.

Flame Lord Moskogg, in area **V3d**, is used to Thulma's stentorian bellows and her occasional brawls with unfortunate Acolytes, so it takes a fight of unusual violence to draw his attention. Make a DC 22 Listen check for him each round of combat; success indicates that he has taken notice of the commotion. Any unusual attack, such as a flashy evocation spell, gets his attention immediately (no check required). If Moskogg sees something he doesn't like, he gathers up the Acolytes in area **V3c** and leads a full-scale attack against any intruders 5 rounds after he first notices trouble.

V3A. THE COOKTENT (EL 12)

This area has been set aside to serve as the Acolytes' kitchen and mess hall. The kitchen is the territory of Thulma the Terrible, an ogre cook who terrorizes any wretches unfortunate enough to fall under her command.

Read or paraphrase the following if the PCs arrive here during the day. If they enter this area at night, adjust the information to reflect the **Creatures** entry, below.

Walls made of neatly stacked rubble and fieldstone form three sides of an open-air kitchen and refectory. Kegs of ale, sacks of flour, and long racks for hanging game sit under rough lean-tos built against the walls, and several trestle tables are arranged in the sheltered area. A few bedraggled humans scurry around preparing food, while a female ogre draped in ill-fitting chainmail stomps about, bellowing at and cuffing those who move too slowly. A pair of raiders in flame-blazoned hauberks sit at one of the trestle tables, drinking ale and gnawing on smoked meat.

Creatures: During the daytime, two Acolyte soldiers take a meal at the table, while Thulma and her cadre of slaves (three human Com1; 3 hp) prepare more food. At night, only Thulma is here, sleeping under a huge bearskin and snoring abominably.

Thulma has made a career of cooking for various bands of brigands, raiders, cutthroats, and malcontents, and she regards the Acolytes as just one more gang that needs looking after. She cares for nothing beyond her kitchen, which she rules as a tyrant.

Thulma pays no attention whatsoever to characters who simply pass by along the road. She responds to any attempts to strike up a conversation with an ear-blistering tirade of curses and imprecations, but she basically assumes that anyone who shows up at her kitchen needs to be fed. If she discovers otherwise, she attempts to run off the offenders with blows of her cudgel and uses her cleaver (actually a well-made dwarven greataxe) on anyone offering resistance.

The Acolytes eating at the table are not particularly attentive. They pay little mind to anyone who brazenly walks past, figuring that the newcomers are looking for Moskogg so that they can join up. A party behaving suspiciously (skulking about the barracks house, approaching with weapons drawn, and so on) draws their attention, though. Assuming that such PCs do not seem overtly hostile, the Acolytes suggest that they ought to go talk to Moskogg about joining up, and they escort the PCs through area **V3c** to area **V3d**. If the characters show signs of leaving without talking to Moskogg, the Acolytes attack without hesitation, since they have orders keep any unidentified persons from leaving without being taken before Moskogg.

☙ **Acolyte Soldiers (2):** hp 43, 33; see area **K4a**.

➤ **Thulma the Terrible, Female Ogre War4/Exp4:** CR 10; Large Giant; HD 4d8+20 plus 4d8+20 plus 4d6+20; hp 110; Init -1; Spd 20 ft. (+2 chainmail), base 30 ft.; AC 16, touch 9, flat-

RESPONSES TO BARRACKS HOUSE ATTACKS

If any portion of the barracks house is attacked and the perpetrators escape, Moskogg and Dregadzel assume that the perpetrators will return, so they prepare an ambush against that possibility. Moskogg casts a *divination* spell to learn when the barracks house will be attacked again, then makes sure that Varra and the Acolyte soldiers are awake, armed, and ready for battle at that time. If he feels it appropriate, the minotaur places Dregadzel (in her alternate form) and a couple of Acolyte soldier volunteers in the cage as "captives."

If Moskogg dies, the Acolytes in the barracks house abandon the camp and flee. Eventually, they resume their careers as solitary thugs and bandits. Dregadzel joins Jendar Tholm in his demesne (area **D4**).

If most of the Acolyte soldiers are killed but Moskogg remains alive, the minotaur cleric abandons the barracks house and moves into the dungeons, taking up residence in the Cells of Chastisement (Part III, area **D23**) and confining any remaining captives there. Dregadzel accompanies him, if she survives.

The other leaders of the cult regard their human marauders and minions (specifically, any Acolytes residing in Selskar Vale, as opposed to the dungeons beneath the Tower) as completely expendable. If crusading adventurers free the captives and scatter the Acolyte soldiers in the vale, Jendar Tholm, Durzhul, and the other leaders don't even bother to respond, hoping that the would-be heroes can be content just to rescue the prisoners.

footed 16; Base Atk +10; Grp +20; Atk +15 melee (1d6+6, Medium club); Full Atk +15/+10 melee (1d8+6, Medium club) or +17/+12 melee (1d12+9/×3, Medium masterwork greataxe) or +8 ranged (1d8+6, Large throwing axe); Space/Reach 5 ft./10 ft.; SQ low-light vision; AL NE; SV Fort +14, Ref +2, Will +5; Str 23, Dex 8, Con 20, Int 10, Wis 8, Cha 9.

Skills: Climb +8, Diplomacy +1, Heal +1, Hide –9, Intimidate +7, Listen +11, Profession (cook) +4, Sense Motive +4, Spot +11.
Feats: Alertness, Cleave, Improved Bull Rush, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (greataxe).

Possessions: Large +2 *chainmail*, masterwork greataxe (Thulma's "cleaver"), club, +1 *ring of protection*, 4 Large throwing axes.

Tactics: If a fight breaks out between the PCs and the Acolytes, Thulma wades in against both sides for starting a ruckus in her kitchen unless it's clear that the PCs are intruders. In that case, she aids the Acolytes.

If pressed, Thulma snatches a big cauldron of boiling water from the hearth and hurls it at the character who most offends her. The boiling cauldron functions as a splash weapon, dealing 4d6 points of fire damage to the target struck and splashing anyone within 5 feet for 1d6 points of fire damage. Thulma herself takes 1d6 points of fire damage from handling the hot cauldron.

Treasure: Thulma has buried a large clay pot behind the southeast hearth (Search DC 20). It contains 840 sp, 450 gp, and a *wand of lightning bolt* (caster level 7th, 21 charges). Thulma knows the wand is magical and that she can't use it herself, but she hopes to trade it to a wizard for something else of value.

The wagon that stands north of the kitchen is actually the second Silver Blade wagon. (The first is hidden at the juncture of the Old Selskar Road and the Surbrin Way; see area **K3b**.) The goods it once contained have been removed.

V3B. THE CAGE (EL 8)

The Acolytes used fieldstone and thick timbers to build a set of large cages for their prisoners. Fifteen captives are currently held here, guarded by two Acolyte soldiers.

More crude, fieldstone walls enclose a large area that is segregated into open-air cells by thick timber posts. More than a dozen wretched captives—humans, half-orcs, and dwarves—shiver inside these cages. Several wear tattered surcoats bearing the insignias of various merchant costers, while others seem to be common woodcutters or hunters.

Beneath a ramshackle canvas tent next to the cages, two humans wearing brown cloaks over breastplates with the twin flame insignia stand guard over the captives. An immense, vicious-looking wolf lies curled up nearby.

The cages are made of strong timbers, and the doors are simple swinging gates secured by iron padlocks. One of the Acolyte soldiers posted here has the keys.

❖ **Locked Cage:** 6-in. timbers; Hardness 5; 60 hp each; break DC 28; Escape Artist DC 23 (to wriggle through the bars); Open Lock DC 30.

Creatures: Two Acolyte soldiers and a particularly large and wicked worg named Slaver guard the captives. These soldiers are vigilant and suspicious, challenging anyone who approaches openly. If they are satisfied with the answers to their queries, they direct newcomers across the road to the barracks house. If they are suspicious, the soldiers attack.

☙ **Acolyte Soldiers (2):** hp 49, 42; see area **K4a**.

➔ **Slaver, Male Advanced Worg:** CR 5; Large Magical Beast; HD 10d10+40; hp 95; Init +1; Spd 50 ft.; AC 14, touch 10, flat-footed 13; Base Atk +10; Grp +21; Atk +17 melee (1d8+10, bite); Full Atk +17 melee (1d8+10, bite); Space/Reach 5 ft./10 ft.; SA trip; SQ darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision, scent; AL NE; SV Fort +11, Ref +8, Will +7; Str 25, Dex 13, Con 19, Int 6, Wis 14, Cha 10.

Skills: Hide +0, Listen +9, Move Silently +5, Spot +9, Survival+3 (+7 when tracking by scent). **Feats:** Alertness, Iron Will, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (bite).

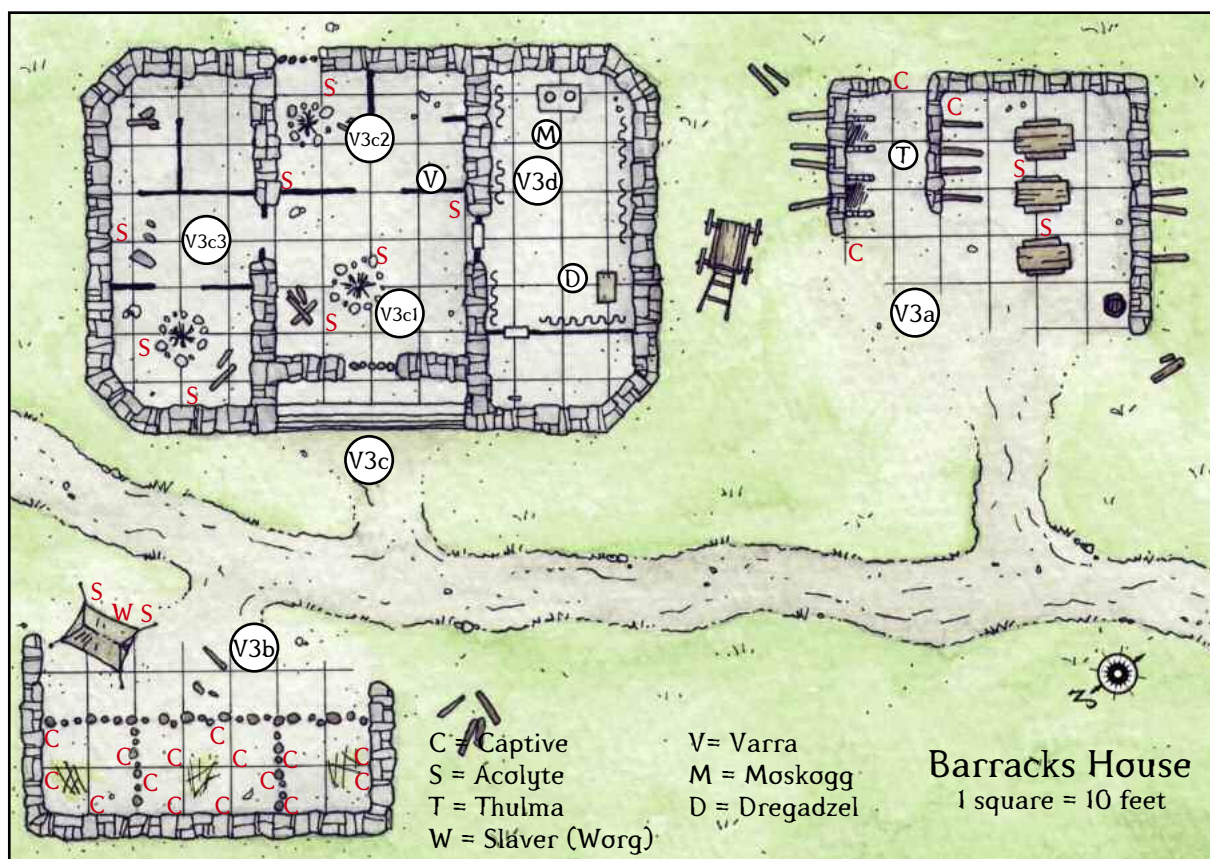
Tactics: Slaver and the Acolyte soldiers are here to keep the captives in line, not to fend off a full-scale rescue effort. If overmatched, they skirmish for a round or two and then try to retreat across the road to the barracks house. They intentionally make a lot of noise while fighting and do not hesitate to call for assistance if they can. (See **General Skirmishing**, above.)

Development: If the captives see their guards defeated, they clamor to be set free and beg the heroes for protection. Failing that, they ask for a chance to arm themselves and escape the vale. The prisoners in the cages include:

- *Dreth, Edsard, Hela, Ilsa, Morrin, Staarvid, Thurgan, and Welsil (Male and Female Human or Dwarf Com1):* Five of these wagondrivers came from the Three Shields caravan; the remainder came from the Silver Blade caravan, which was taken a tenday ago.
- *Andremel, Belindara, and Jhovar (Male and Female Human or Half-Orc War2):* These three caravan guards came from the Silver Blade caravan.
- *Yuirel (CG Male Half-Elf Exp4):* Yuirel is a woodcutter and trapper who was captured near the Moonwood.
- *Khell Barrowhand (NG Male Human Ftr6):* Khell is an adventurer who was escorting the Silver Blade caravan when it was attacked a tenday ago.
- *Serrila Destare (CG Female Aasimar Wiz7):* Serrila was abducted by the Acolytes from the Three Shields caravan described in Part I, area **K1**. She has refused to join the Acolytes, and she is not the correct alignment to assist in the rite of unbinding.
- *Ghera the Silent (NG Female Ghostwise Halfling Rog5):* Ghera is a companion of Khell's. She has the skills to slip out and make an escape whenever she likes, but she has thus far remained behind hoping to help Khell find a way out.

V3C. THE BARRACKS HOUSE (EL 13)

The barracks house is in better condition than any other building of the old Selskar complex (except the observatory, which Orichalxos and the Claws inhabit), and it is safer than the ruins



of the Tower of the Star. Most of the rank-and-file Acolytes bunk here.

When the PCs get a look inside the structure, continue with the following:

Two-thirds of this building has collapsed, leaving 20-foot tall empty walls open to the sky. The southern portion, however, seems to be nearly intact. Stone steps lead up to a crude gate made of timbers that stands where the building's original doors would have been. Much of the rubble from the collapse of the upper floors has apparently been cleared out.

The remnants of interior walls divide the structure into several partial rooms. In and around the ruins lie more than a dozen pallets in groups of four or five. Each such grouping surrounds a carefully tended campfire.

The Acolytes built the timber gate to deter wandering creatures. It is secured only by a stout loop of rope, which functions like a lock. The other two entrances to the barracks house on the north and east walls are smaller and protected with similar gates.

The exterior walls vary from 15 to 25 feet in height. The remains of the interior walls are only about 6 to 8 feet tall. (The walls surrounding area **V3d** are 25 feet tall, and this portion of the complex is not open to the sky—the remnants of a second story lie 15 feet above the floor.) Heaps of uncleared rubble are scattered throughout the ruins.

🔨 **Timber Gate:** 3 in. thick; Hardness 5; 30 hp; break DC 28; Open Lock DC 10.

🧱 **Exterior Walls:** 3 ft. thick; Hardness 8; 540 hp; Climb DC 22; break DC 50.

🧱 **Interior Walls:** 1 ft. thick; Hardness 8; 90 hp; Climb DC 15; break DC 35.

Creatures: At the moment, several of the Acolytes are on duty elsewhere. The current occupants of the barracks include eight Acolyte soldiers and the Flame Priest Varra. They are grouped as follows:

Area V3c1: This group includes three Acolyte soldiers, two of whom are awake and armed by day. At night, they trade off watches, so one is asleep.

Area V3c2: Flame Priest Varra and two Acolyte soldiers sleep here. By day, all are awake and armed, but at night Varra and one Acolyte soldier sleep.

Area V3c3: This group includes three Acolyte soldiers, two of whom are awake and armed by day. At night, they trade off watches, so one is asleep.

👤 **Acolyte Soldiers (8):** hp 33 each; see area **V4a**.

👤 **Flame Priest Varra, Female Human Clr9 (Talos):** CR 9; Medium Humanoid; HD 9d8+18; hp 59; Init +1; Spd 20 ft. (+1 full plate), base 30 ft.; AC 23, touch 11, flat-footed 22; Base Atk +6; Grp +8; Atk +10 melee (1d8+3, +1 heavy mace); Full Atk +10/+5 melee (1d8+3, +1 heavy mace) or +8 ranged (1d8/19–20, master-

work light crossbow); SA rebuke undead (2/day); SQ electricity resistance 5; AL CE; SV Fort +8, Ref +4, Will +12; Str 14, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 18, Cha 8.

Skills: Concentration +15*, Knowledge (religion) +6, Spellcraft +9, Spot +10. **Feats:** Combat Casting, Iron Will, Scribe Scroll, Spell Penetration, Weapon Focus (heavy mace).

*Includes +4 bonus from Combat Casting.

Cleric Spells Prepared (6/6/6/5/4/2; base save DC = 14 + spell level): 0—*cure minor wounds* ×2, *detect magic*, *guidance*, *light*, *resistance*; 1st—*burning hands**, *cause fear*, *cure light wounds*, *divine favor*, *doom*, *shield of faith*; 2nd—*bear's endurance*, *cure moderate wounds* ×2, *hold person*, *produce flame**, *silence*; 3rd—*call lightning**, *dispel magic*, *invisibility purge*, *searing light*, *summon monster III*; 4th—*air walk*, *freedom of movement*, *poison*, *wall of fire**; 5th—*flame strike*, *ice storm**.

*Domain spell. **Domains:** Fire (turn water/rebuke fire 2/day), Storm* (electricity resistance 5).

Possessions: +1 full plate, +1 heavy steel shield, +1 heavy mace, masterwork light crossbow with 20 bolts, *periapt of Wisdom* +2.

Negotiations: A party that approaches openly and strikes up a conversation does not automatically provoke a hostile response. The Acolytes are interested in enlisting new members, so they begin by questioning the PCs as to why they are in Selskar Vale. Should any characters indicate an interest in joining the group, the Acolytes bring the prospects before Moskogg (see area **V3d**). If the PCs admit they have no intention of joining the Acolytes or say that they're in the Vale to explore the dungeon, the soldiers still try to introduce the newcomers to Moskogg, albeit with a subtle warning to the flame lord that the PCs are a threat.

Tactics: The Acolytes defend themselves if attacked, and they attack any strangers who seem to be spying on them or skulking about in a suspicious manner. Sleeping Acolytes wake up 1 round after any combat begins. In the following round, they snatch up their weapons and join the fight, but they remain unarmored. They stop to put on their armor only if allowed the opportunity to do so (for example, if the PCs engage in a long negotiation with their comrades before combat begins).

V3D. THE FLAME LORD'S CHAPEL (EL 16)

This large barracks room is the only part of the building still roofed and intact. Moskogg, a half-fiend/half-minotaur cleric of Kossuth and one of the leaders of the Acolytes, uses this chamber as his chapel and audience hall. He is attended by his secretary, Dregadzel—a gray slaad in human form.

This large room has been cleared of all debris and appointed with tapestries of red, orange, and gold. An altar-block of gleaming obsidian stands near the eastern end of the room. Slitlike windows pierce the southern wall, letting in slanting rays of sunlight. You spot a door in the west wall of the chamber, and a writing desk stands next to one of the windows.

A slender human woman wearing a noble's garb of gray and pearl arranges papers on the desk. Beside the altar stands a hulking minotaur with rust-red fur and eyes like balls of flame.

Sinister runes score his horns, and he wears a breastplate emblazoned with the symbol of a twining red flame. He carries a massive greataxe easily in one huge hand.

The altar-stone is impressive, but it is neither magical nor evil. The writing desk is the sort favored by merchants. Stolen from a caravan a few months ago, it is now littered with duty rosters and correspondence.

The door to the south leads to Moskogg's personal quarters, although the cleric requires little sleep and does not spend much time there. The room features an oversized sleeping pallet and Moskogg's personal possessions (see **Treasure**, below).

Creatures: Moskogg oversees all Acolyte activities in Selskar Vale and answers only to Jendar Tholm. The flame lord is attended by Dregadzel, a slender, scholarly, seemingly human woman. In truth, she is a gray slaad who serves as his secretary and lieutenant. She makes sure that the flame lord's zeal is translated into efficient and inspired plans.

➤ **Flame Lord Moskogg, Male Half-fiend/Half-minotaur C1r9 (Kossuth):** CR 15; Large Outsider; HD 6d8+30 plus 9d8+45; hp 142; Init +2; Spd 30 ft., fly 30 ft. (average); AC 24, touch 11, flat-footed 22; Base Atk +12; Grp +23; Atk +20 melee (3d6+12/19–20/×3, Large greataxe [+2 with *greater magic weapon*]); Full Atk +20/+15/+10 melee (3d6+12/19–20/×3, Large greataxe [+2 with *greater magic weapon*]) and +13 melee (1d8+3, gore), or +18 melee (1d8+7, bite) and +13 melee (1d6+3, 2 claws) and +13 melee (1d8+3, gore); Space/Reach 10 ft./10 ft.; SA powerful charge 4d6+10, rebuke undead (4/day), spell-like abilities; SQ darkvision 60 ft., DR 10/magic, natural cunning, poison immunity, resistances (acid 10, cold 10, electricity 10, fire 10), scent; SR 25; AL CE; SV Fort +17, Ref +12, Will +17; Str 24, Dex 14, Con 20, Int 11, Wis 19, Cha 13.

Skills: Bluff +5, Climb +8*, Concentration +17, Intimidate +10, Jump +8*, Knowledge (religion) +4, Listen +13, Search +9, Sense Motive +8, Spellcraft +4, Spot +13. **Feats:** Cleave, Combat Reflexes, Great Fortitude, Improved Critical (greataxe), Iron Will, Power Attack.

*Includes –3 armor check penalty.

Spell-Like Abilities: 3/day—*darkness*, *poison*, *unholy aura*; 1/day—*blasphemy*, *contagion*, *desecrate*, *horrid wilting*, *unhallow*, *unholy blight*. Caster level 15th; save DC 11 + spell level.

Cleric Spells Prepared (6/6/6/5/4/2; base save DC = 14 + spell level): 0—*cure minor wounds*, *detect magic* ×2, *guidance*, *light*, *resistance*; 1st—*burning hands**, *cure light wounds*, *detect good*, *detect law*, *divine favor*, *shield of faith*; 2nd—*cure moderate wounds*, *hold person*, *lesser restoration*, *remove paralysis*, *shatter**, *silence*; 3rd—*dispel magic* ×2, *invisibility purge*, *resist energy**, *searing light*; 4th—*cure critical wounds*, *greater magic weapon* (already cast), *summon monster IV*, *wall of fire**; 5th—*fire shield**, *flame strike*.

*Domain spell. **Domains:** Destruction (smite 1/day), Fire (turn water/rebuke fire 4/day).

Possessions: +2 breastplate, Large greataxe (+2 with *greater magic weapon* cast), cloak of resistance +2, *periapt of Wisdom* +2, scroll of *fire storm* (caster level 13th), scroll of *summon monster VII*, wand

of cure moderate wounds (14 charges), key to the gate in area **D4** in the Tower of the Star.

➤ **Dregadzel, Female Gray Slaad:** hp 95; *Monster Manual* 231, except AC 27, touch 16, flat-footed 24; Atk +15 melee (1d8+4/19–20, masterwork longsword); Full Atk +15/+10 melee (1d8+4/19–20, masterwork longsword) and +12 melee (2d8+1, bite), or +14 melee (2d4+3, 2 claws) and +12 melee (2d8+1, bite); *Feats:* Craft Magic Arms and Armor, Craft Wand, Iron Will, Multiattack.

See the *Monster Manual* for descriptions of a gray slaad's special abilities.

Possessions: +2 studded leather armor (worn in human form only), masterwork longsword, ring of protection +3, wand of confusion (18 charges).

➤ **Dregadzel, Female Gray Slaad (Human Form):** As above, except Dregadzel cannot use her claw or bite attacks in human shape, relying instead on her longsword and armor.

Tactics: If the PCs show up in his chambers with no escorting Acolytes, Moskogg presumes that he is under attack and throws himself into battle. If the PCs are escorted into his presence, he questions them closely to determine who they are and what they are doing in Selskar Vale. He uses *detect good* and *detect law* to ascertain their true allegiance. If the PCs balk at being subjected to such spells, the flame lord attacks.

Moskogg is only too happy to fight. He throws himself fearlessly into battle, mixing melee attacks with his spell-like abilities and spells. If warned to expect a party of intruders, he uses *unholy aura* to prepare himself for battle. When he engages the enemies, he leads off with *blasphemy* or *horrid wilting*. Moskogg looks for opportunities to charge and smite at the same time.

Dregadzel, on the other hand, is much more circumspect. She has access to all of her spell-like abilities in human form, so she first uses *invisibility* to stay out of sight, then *power word blind* on any character who seems able to detect her while she is invisible. If presented with the opportunity to corner a lone enemy, she changes back to her slaad shape while invisible, then launches a fierce onslaught of melee attacks.

Moskogg is inclined to fight to the death, but Dregadzel is not so determined. If things look bad, she uses her *darkness* and *fly* abilities to make a quick escape.

Any Acolytes who escorted the party into Moskogg's presence defend the flame lord with their lives should a fight break out.

Treasure: A pair of iron-bound chests in Moskogg's personal quarters contain much of the wealth that the Acolytes have stolen from travelers: 1,800 sp, 2,900 gp, a fire opal pendant (800 gp), a ring of jet (280 gp), and a matched set of four golden goblets (160 gp each). Each chest is protected by a *glyph of warding* trap. Moskogg carries a key to the gate between areas **D4** and **D5**.

➤ **Glyph of Warding (Blast) Trap:** CR 4; spell; spell trigger; no reset; spell effect (*glyph of warding* [blast]; 9th-level cleric, 4d8 sonic, DC 14 Reflex save half damage); multiple targets (all targets within 5 ft.); Search DC 28; Disable Device DC 28.

V4. TOWER OF THE STAR

Once the proud keep of the Selskar Order, the Tower of the Star still crowns the steep hill in the center of Selskar Vale. The now dilapidated structure looms over the cold lake and the forested ruins of the town that once stood here.

The old keep must have been a striking place in its day. Vast quantities of rubble litter the steep, barren slopes of the knoll, and little remains at the top except thick walls that outline the original shape of the fortress. The causeway climbs around the feet of the old stronghold, eventually ascending to the wreckage of an ancient gatehouse at the southern end of the keep. None of the main keep's upper floors still stand, and the remaining structure seems little more than an empty shell of battered walls and wind-rustled weeds.

The tower and the dungeons beneath it are described in detail in Part III. Characters approaching the keep openly by either climbing up the road or flying may attract the attention of the fomorian on watch in the ruins of the gatehouse (see area **D1**).

PART III: THE DUNGEON OF THE RUINS

The Dungeon of the Ruins consists of the Tower of the Star, plus three distinct levels of dungeon below its ruins: the plinth, the cistern and crypt, and the prison of the Firebringer. Parts of the tower and its dungeons are haunted by undead creatures created during the fall of the tower six hundred years ago; other sections are marked by aberrant magical effects that came into being through the slow decay of the great magics that once filled this place. The Acolytes of the Hidden Flame avoid these spots and make use of only a handful of the rooms below.

In the lowest of the dungeon's levels, the slaad lord Bazim-Gorag bides his time. While he awaits his release, he directs the activities of his Acolytes through Jendar Tholm.

THE RUINED TOWER

Atop the forbidding hill in the center of Selskar Vale stands what is left of the Tower of the Star. Once hundreds of feet tall, the structure has deteriorated. Now only small portions of its ground floor are left.

Three fomorian giants stand guard over the surface ruins of the citadel. Inside the citadel itself is a wild magic zone, and a pair of ancient Selskar guardians keep watch over the tower's inner areas. The Selskar watchghosts allow the Acolytes access to the dungeons below the tower and generally leave them alone.

Two methods allow someone to descend from the tower ruins to the dungeons below. One is a secret teleportation chamber (area **D7**) hidden by the Acolytes long ago. The other is an old stairway (area **D8**) that the Acolytes have cleared to the tower's foundations.

The following sections provide descriptions for the corresponding areas on the map of the ruined tower.

D1. THE GATE (EL 12 TO 15)

Read or paraphrase the following when the PCs reach the gate:

The causeway climbs up the slope to meet a flight of stone steps, which ascends to an old gate. The gatehouse is still reasonably intact compared with the rest of the tower. Not only do most of its walls still stand, but dark arrow slits within them still menace the passage through the thick outer wall to the courtyard.

The mighty door of iron and mithral that once secured this gate was destroyed during the fall of the tower. The dogleg stairs were intended to prevent attackers from bringing a battering ram to bear on the tower's gate.

Creatures: No creatures wait at the gate itself, but one fomorian posted in area **D2** keeps watch over this entrance. The sentry attacks any strangers who approach the gate without warning, but he does not fire on visitors he knows, or even on visitors who look like people he knows. A party dressed in the dun cloaks of Acolytes could easily slip past the gate with nothing but a friendly word from the giant on watch.

➤ **Fomorian:** hp 157; see **Creatures** entry in area **D2**, below.

Tactics: See area **D2**, below.

D2. THE GATEHOUSE (EL 12 TO 15)

The gatehouse shows signs of a long-ago fire that damaged the building badly, but it is still in better condition than the rest of the citadel. At least one floor is intact, and part of a second story still stands above that.

Although the gatehouse is at least partially intact, the area contains only flame-blackened beams and crumbling masonry. The furnishings and any other items of interest were carried off long ago, leaving nothing but an empty wreck. Some portions of the interior walls still stand, and the arrow embrasures on the first floor are intact, but no other features of note remain.

Creatures: The three fomorian giants who guard this gate are brothers. At any given time, two are in the giants' den (area **D3**) and one is on watch on top of the gatehouse. The brothers own one *cloak of elvenkind* between them, which is used by whomever is on watch. The on-duty sentry also has the benefit of improved cover (+6 to AC, +3 on Reflex saves) from opponents on the ground. The giant is vigilant while on watch, and his scent ability allows him to sense invisible characters within 30 feet.

➤ **Male Fomorian:** CR 11; Huge Giant; HD 15d8+90; hp 157; Init +1; Spd 30 ft. (chainmail), base 40 ft.; AC 23, touch 9, flat-footed 22; Base Atk +11; Grp +31; Atk +21 melee (4d6+18/19–20, Huge heavy flail) or +10 ranged (2d8/19–20, Huge heavy cross-

bow); Full Atk +21/+16/+11 melee (4d6+18/19–20, Huge heavy flail) or +10 ranged (2d8/19–20, Huge heavy crossbow); Space/Reach 15 ft./15 ft.; SA trample 2d10+18; SQ damage reduction 5/—, fast healing 5, low-light vision, scent; AL NE; SV Fort +15, Ref +6, Will +6; Str 34, Dex 12, Con 22, Int 11, Wis 13, Cha 9.

Skills: Hide –12*, Listen +3, Move Silently +29, Spot +21. **Feats:** Alertness, Cleave, Great Cleave, Power Attack, Track.

*The fomorian on watch and wearing the *cloak of elvenkind* has a Hide bonus of –7.

Trample (Ex): As a standard action during his turn each round, a fomorian can trample Large or smaller opponents. This attack deals 2d10+18 points of bludgeoning damage. A trampled opponent can attempt to either make an attack of opportunity at a –4 penalty or a Reflex save (DC 29) for half damage.

Possessions: Huge chainmail, Huge heavy flail, Huge heavy crossbow with 20 bolts.

Tactics: The fomorian is armed with a Huge heavy crossbow, so he could conceivably fire on approaching foes several hundred feet away. In practice, however, he waits until approaching parties draw within 100 feet or so of the gate to make sure he isn't shooting fellow Acolytes. As noted above, the fomorian sentry might let a disguised group pass through the castle gate unhindered, but he immediately attacks anyone entering the gatehouse.

If he seems too exposed on the rooftop during combat, the fomorian moves downstairs to the ground floor of the gatehouse and continues to fire through the arrow slits, which offer him even better cover (+8 bonus to AC, +4 bonus on Reflex saves) against attacks from outside.

If pressed by determined attackers, the sentry calls for his brothers (both in area **D3**) to come and help him. They appear in the courtyard just beyond the gate 2 rounds later.

D3. GIANTS' DEN (EL 13)

The fomorians discovered some time ago that the gatehouse didn't provide them enough room, so they used the rubble around the tower to build a fieldstone lodge in the lower courtyard.

Read or paraphrase the following when the characters approach the giants' dwelling:

The gate opens onto a courtyard about 100 feet across. At the southwest corner stands the old gatehouse, and a flight of stone steps in the middle of the northern wall leads up to another, higher courtyard. A large, clumsy structure of fieldstone and thatch leans against the rubble of the eastern wall. The building looks like a ramshackle, oversized house with a crude wooden door a full 15 feet tall.

GETTING IN

Most of the Tower of the Star has collapsed, but only area **D6** is actually open to the sky. The rest of the ground floor is covered by the remains of the second floor. Characters who do not wish to enter via the gate between areas **D4** and **D5** can simply fly or climb into area **D6**.

The outer walls of the keep rise 20 to 40 feet above the level of the high court. They are in such poor condition that a successful DC 20 Climb check is required to climb them safely. They are also porous enough for gaseous creatures to pass through.

The fomorians consider this a cramped little hut, hardly better than a chicken coop. From the viewpoint of a human-sized character, however, the single room is oversized. The hut is filled with tools and utensils sized for giants, including a soup kettle as tall as a human and a stirring-spoon carved from a 4-foot-long tree limb.

Creatures: Three fomorian brothers named Samader, Turzager, and Mosvather live here. One of them is always on watch in area **D2**; the other two are here unless called to join a fight.

These three fomorians fell in with the Acolytes a little more than a year ago, and they have remained staunchly loyal ever since. They are not religious the way some of the Acolytes are; rather they view their association with the organization as an alliance of convenience. They provide the flame lords with muscle, and in turn the flame lords see to it that the fomorians receive a good cut of the loot. The giants expect no visitors here, and they attack any intruders.

The two not on watch can be summoned to help defend area **D1** or **D2** by a call from whichever brother is on duty. The fomorians are very loyal to each other, and all three fight ferociously in defense of their siblings.

➤ **Male Fomorians (2):** hp 166, 148; see area **D2**.

Tactics: These two fomorians prefer to engage in melee as quickly as possible. They use their trample attacks against any opponents they have a hard time hitting in melee. Should their enemies manage to stay out of reach, the fomorians look for places to take cover so that they can make use of their fast healing ability. If the three brothers are fighting near the gate, they would rather abandon it and retreat into their lodge than stand their ground and be killed. After all, they can always pursue enemies after they've recovered lost hit points.

Treasure: The leaders of the Acolytes allow the fomorians to claim lots of loot from the cult's raids, since treasure keeps the creatures happy. In the giants' hut are two oversized wooden chests. Between them, they contain 6,900 sp, 1,850 gp, a gold comb in the shape of a dragon with ruby eyes (1,400 gp), a silver fillet (800 gp), a silver bracelet (500 gp), and a platinum and onyx ring (3,000 gp).

D4. THE HIGH COURT

The Tower of the Star boasted two courtyards—a higher one and a lower one.

A flight of stone steps leads from the lower courtyard, beside the gatehouse, up to a high courtyard placed immediately before the wreckage of the ancient keep. If any gate once separated the lower court from the upper one, it is long gone, and the buildings that once stood within these walls are nothing more than rubble. In the center of the courtyard, another flight of steps rises toward the gate of the keep itself, stopping 10 feet short. A drawbridge must once have spanned this gap, but now several planed timbers form a temporary bridge to the keep. The structure's original doors have been replaced by new ones made from thick green timbers lashed together.

The timbers are a little treacherous, requiring a successful DC 10 Balance check to cross without falling. Even so, however, they are not particularly dangerous, since the fall is only 10 feet.

A crude lock secures the gate leading to area **D5**. Each of the flame lords (Moskogg, Durzhul) holds a key, as does the green slaad Xorfilstaarg (see area **D15**, below) and the High Conflagration.

🔑 **Timber Gate:** 4 in. thick; Hardness 5; 40 hp; break DC 31; Open Lock DC 30.

D5. THE FOREHALL (WILD MAGIC ZONE, EL 14)

The aboveground remains of the tower are subject to a zone of wild magic and haunted by the restless spirits of Selskaryn guards. The Acolytes do not tarry in areas **D5**, **D6**, **D7**, or **D8**, and they leave no guards in this portion of the ruins.

For details on the effect of the wild magic zone, see pages 54–55 of the *FORGOTTEN REALMS Campaign Setting*. Any character attempting to cast a spell or activate a magic item within such a zone must make a caster level check (DC 15 + spell level) or make a random roll to determine whether the spell works properly or against the right target. For magic items, use the item's caster level for the check. Use half the item's caster level for the spell level if it's not clear what spell the item "casts."

Read or paraphrase the following when the PCs arrive here:

This chamber was evidently a foresail in the tower's earlier days. Enough remains of the floor above to enclose this room, but the walls are little better than mounds of rubble, and the beams overhead sag alarmingly. A crude door of large timbers has replaced the main gate in the south wall, and a passage to the north leads through the rubble. To the south, an archway leading to another hall has been boarded up. Part of the northern wall seems to be in better condition than the rest of the room.

As noted in area **D4**, the tower door is locked. The ceiling of this chamber is about 15 to 20 feet above the floor, its exact height varying with the amount of sagging. If it takes 15 or more points of damage from any direct impact or magical effect, a portion of the ceiling collapses, raining debris in a 5-foot radius. Each creature within this area takes 3d6 points of damage (Reflex DC 15 negates). Such a partial collapse leaves a 5-foot diameter hole that leads outside the tower.

The boarded archway to the west is not intended to be a true barrier—the Acolytes put it there to remind themselves not to venture into the area guarded by the watchghosts. It can be pulled down with a successful DC 15 Strength check.

The intact northern wall conceals a secret door (Search DC 25) leading to area **D7**. The Selskar mages used this portal to reach various points in the tower without hiking up and down stairs.

Creatures: Two watchghosts—spectral guards created from human warriors by the Selskar wizards—roam the upper ruins. The creatures have agreed to an uneasy truce with the Acolytes and their minions, so they do not attack the Acolytes or their leaders.

These watchghosts normally remain in area **D6**, but there is a 10% noncumulative chance every 10 minutes that they wander through this room. However, any conspicuous activity here (such as fighting or a loud argument) draws their attention immediately. Should they detect such activity, both watchghosts move toward the room, drifting through the wall between area **D5** and area **D6** 1d3 rounds after the disturbance begins.

➤ **Male and Female Selskar Watchghost Ftr8 (against material opponents):** CR 10; Medium Undead (human, incorporeal); HD 8d12; hp 52; Init +6; Spd fly 30 ft. (perfect); AC 14, touch 14, flat-footed 12; Base Atk +8; Grp —; Atk +10 melee touch (1d6, corrupting touch); Full Atk +10/+5 melee touch (1d6, corrupting touch) or +10 ranged touch (2d4 Con damage, chill ray); SA chill ray, corrupting touch, manifestation; SQ cold immunity, incorporeal subtype, magical radiance, rejuvenation, turn resistance +4, undead traits; SR 20; AL LE; SV Fort +6, Ref +6, Will +5; Str —, Dex 14, Con —, Int 8, Wis 12, Cha 14.

Skills: Climb +6, Hide +10, Jump +6, Listen +12, Ride +4, Search +7, Spot +12. **Feats:** Alertness, Dodge, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Mobility, Spring Attack, Weapon Focus (halberd), Weapon Specialization (halberd).

Chill Ray (Su): Up to twelve times per day, a Selskar watchghost can fire a ray of cold at an enemy as a ranged touch attack (range 90 feet). While the chill ray normally deals 2d6 points of temporary Constitution damage, those of the Selskar ghosts only deal 2d4. In addition, the target must make a successful Will save (DC 16) or be affected by a *slow* spell for 8 rounds.

Magical Radiance (Su): At will, a Selskar watchghost can cause all magic items within 60 feet to glow with white radiance, illuminating a 5-foot sphere. The Selskar wizards augmented this ability so that it also affects creatures under the influence of ongoing magical effects. Items and creatures affected by this ability continue to glow for 2d4 × 10 minutes.

Rejuvenation (Su): A destroyed watchghost restores itself in 2d4 days if it makes a successful level check (DC 16).

See the *Monster Manual* for descriptions of other ghost special abilities.

Possessions: +1 full plate armor, +1 halberd (all ethereal).

➤ **Male and Female Selskar Watchghost Ftr8 (against ethereal opponents):** CR 10; Medium Undead (human); HD 8d12; hp 52; Init +6; Spd fly 30 ft. (perfect); AC 22, touch 13, flat-footed 21; Base Atk +8; Grp +11; Atk +13 melee (1d10+7/×3, +1 halberd); Atk +13/+8 melee (1d10+7/×3, +1 halberd) or +10 ranged touch (2d4 Con, chill ray); SA chill ray, corrupting touch; SQ cold immunity, magical radiance, manifestation, rejuvenation, turn resistance +4, undead traits; SR 20; AL LE; SV Fort +6, Ref +6, Will +5; Str 16, Dex 14, Con —, Int 8, Wis 12, Cha 14.

Skills: 18 Climb +4*, Hide +5*, Jump +4*, Listen +12, Ride +4, Search +7, Spot +12. **Feats:** Alertness, Dodge, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Mobility, Spring Attack, Weapon Focus (halberd), Weapon Specialization (halberd).

*Includes –5 armor check penalty.

Tactics: The watchghosts activate their magical radiance ability before appearing, affecting all characters in area **D5** except those at the extreme east end. The radiance causes all magic items and characters under magical effects to glow with a cold, white radiance in a 5-foot radius. This light gives away an invisible character's location, although a glowing, invisible character still gains 100% concealment against creatures that can't see invisible foes.

A Selskar watchghost's most effective attack is its chill ray, but it can use that attack only twelve times per day. Thus, after each watchghost has used its chill ray six times, it abandons that tactic and closes to attack with its corrupting touch.

Development: If the Selskar watchghosts are slain, they rejuvenate in area **D6**, provided they succeed at their level checks.

D6. HALL OF FIVE STARS (WILD MAGIC ZONE, EL 14)

Once a place where the Selskar wizards proudly displayed their art, this room is now the demesne of a pair of deadly watchghosts.

This hall is open to the sky but surrounded by the remaining old citadel walls. Heaps of rubble fill most of the room, making the footing uneven. The floor, in the few places where it is visible, is made of black, glossy tile flecked with brilliant white stars. Two archways in the east wall are covered with simple wooden barricades. A strange, sharp smell pervades the air, and the atmosphere feels almost electric.

This is the chamber that the two Selskar watchghosts mentioned in area **D5** were appointed to guard in life. Any character trying to move across the rubble-covered floor of this room must make a successful DC 10 Balance check or make no progress that round. The wooden barricades can be pulled down with a successful DC 15 Strength check.

Creatures: If the PCs have not already slain the two Selskar watchghosts that haunt the aboveground remnants of the tower, they find them here. The watchghosts attack any living creature that enters this room. The Acolytes avoid the room (hence the barricades), since their nonaggression pact with the watchghosts specifically excludes this area.

➤ **Selskar Watchghosts (2):** hp 52 each; see area **D5**.

Development: If the Selskar watchghosts are defeated anywhere within the complex, they rejuvenate in this room if they succeed at their level checks.

D7. THE INVISIBLE STAIR (EL 9)

The Selskar wizards crafted this portal to permit access to their secret chambers within the tower's subterranean levels.

Behind the secret door lies a remarkably well-preserved chamber, octagonal in shape and about 20 feet across. The walls are built of silver-flecked black granite, and the floor is made of veined black marble. Inscribed in the floor is a circle of gleaming silver, about 6 feet in diameter.

The Tower

1 square = 10 feet



Gatehouse,
upper story

The circle is a functioning *portal* with four possible destinations, one of which was designed to be a trap (see **Trap**, below). The *portal* operates by means of a key—in this case, the casting of any arcane spell, followed by a statement of a destination in Loross, the old language of High Netheril. The *portal* remains operational for 1 round, so any other creature stepping into the circle during that time is transported as well. The destinations are as follows:

Lower Hall/ Forehall: Speaking either of these two destinations transports any creature standing on this *portal* to the lower hall in the plinth, one level down (or to the forehall [area **D5**], if the speaker is using the corresponding *portal* on the lower level).

High Seat: Speaking this destination once transported the speaker to a *portal* chamber near the high seat, a hall near the top of the Tower of the Star. That level and its *portal* no longer exist, so designating this destination simply transports the speaker to a point in the air about 150 feet above area **D6**, making a fall quite likely.

Ioulaum: Transporting to this destination requires an additional key—a silver, star-shaped cloak clasp that was the emblem of the Selskaryn. This destination formerly led to a guildhouse in Ioulaum, one of the great flying cities of Netheril. The *portal* now takes the speaker to a point about 2,000 feet above the Plain of Standing Stones in Anauroch.

Trap: The creators of this small *portal* system built a simple but very effective trap into the device—a “universal” key that

any creature could trigger. Simply standing on the *portal* for 4 rounds without casting a spell constitutes a trigger in and of itself. In this case, no matter what destination is spoken (or even if no destination is specified at all), the *portal* transports the triggering creature to a particularly desolate portion of the High Ice north of Anauroch. Worse yet, this is a creature-only *portal* that leaves all of the affected creature's possessions in the Tower of the Star. The High Ice happens to be a cold climate at the moment, and monsters of all sorts roam its vastness.

If you don't want to deal with the spontaneous challenge of creating adventures appropriate for a naked and unarmed PC in a freezing desert 1,000 miles away, you could alter the destination of the *portal* trap to any place that strikes you as appropriate. Transporting the character to a point 100 feet above the icy waters of Selskar Lake, a few hundred yards from the Tower of the Star, is a good fallback option.

➤ **Portal Trap:** CR 8; magic device; location trigger; automatic reset; spell effect (*greater teleport*, 17th-level wizard); Search DC 32, Disable Device DC 32.

D8. LOWER KITCHENS (WILD MAGIC ZONE, EL 14)

This mazelike chamber is also part of the wild magic zone within the tower's ruined first floor. Read or paraphrase the following aloud when the characters enter:

Like the forehall outside, this portion of the ruined keep still has something of a ceiling, although the rafters are bent and broken. This chamber seems to have been the main kitchen of the old citadel—the walls still house several large hearths with iron fittings. The area is divided by the remnants of interior walls into what must once have been storerooms. The rubble and debris have been cleared away from a steep stone staircase that leads down.

These stairs were used by the Selskaryn servants and guards to reach those portions of the fortress foundations that were not kept secret by the order. The Acolytes prefer to come and go by this means because they have not yet figured out how to make use of the *portal* in area **D7** safely.

A successful DC 24 Search check made by a character with the Track feat reveals both climbing and descending tracks made by several creatures, including (at various times) a dwarf, a minotaur, two or three different humans, and a very large frog-like creature that walked on two legs.

Creatures: The two Selskar watchghosts described in area **D5** and **D6** periodically wander through this room. If they are still “alive,” there is a 10% noncumulative chance every 10 minutes that they appear here. The watchghosts may also be drawn here by signs of unusual activity in this room.

➤ **Selskar Watchghosts (2):** hp 52 each; see area **D5**.

THE PLINTH

The first dungeon level below the fallen Tower of the Star is called the plinth, since it is actually located within the rock footing of the citadel. The Ar-Magus Ilviroon had great plans for excavating extensive barracks, armories, forges, and mustering halls beneath the tower, but his order fell before he could do much more than reclaim some of the old dwarfwork.

The plinth is divided into two sections. To the north lie the mundane chambers of the fortress above, plus storerooms and wells to help the residents withstand a siege. To the south lie the hidden chambers of the Selskar mages. These two sections were once connected by two secret passages, but one of them (near area **D12**) was long ago opened by dungeon-delving adventurers.

Doors in the plinth are made of iron plate mounted on iron frames, with pintle hinges. Most are badly rusted, requiring a successful DC 23 Strength check to open, but the doors to areas **D15**, **D16**, and **D24** are in better shape than most and open easily.

❖ **Stuck Iron Door:** 2 in. thick; Hardness 10; 60 hp; break DC 28.

D9. GUARDS' STAIR

These stairs lead down from area **D8** in the tower.

The stairs descend about 30 feet before ending in a narrow passage, 5 feet wide and 20 long, with iron doors at either end. Several old skeletons in rusted hauberks have been shoved to the sides of the staircase.

The door to the north is rusted and stuck. The door to the south, however, has been oiled and repaired to some degree by the Acolytes, and it opens easily enough.

❖ **North Door:** 2 in. thick; Hardness 10; 60 hp; break DC 28.

Development: A character with the Track feat who examines the area (Survival DC 19) discovers evidence of a modest amount of traffic leading to the south door, but none to the north door. Another successful DC 29 Survival check reveals that the travelers include large creatures with big, webbed feet and human-sized creatures wearing boots, each of which passed through this room a couple of times per day on average.

The skeletons are the remains of three Selskaryn guards.

D10. THE LOWER HOLD

The chamber to the north formerly served as an armory for the Selskar guards, but it was looted long ago.

More signs of ancient battle are evident here. Two long-limbed, ogre-sized skeletons lie in blackened circles in the center of the room. To the east, a sturdy iron door hangs twisted from its hinges, revealing a chamber that seems to be filled with a clutter of weapons and armor. At the end of a long hallway stands a large double door facing west. A smaller door, positioned near the large one in the east hallway, leads north.

The Acolytes try not to leave obvious signs of their presence in the dungeon below the Tower, in hopes that casual intruders might just give up and leave. To that end, Durzhul has cast two *illusory wall* spells here to disguise the stairways that lead down to the old hidden Selskar rooms on this level (areas **D15** to **D20**) and to the cistern level below (areas **D21** to **D27**).

The Acolytes and their slaadi allies pass through this hall several times a day to get from the staircase in area **D9** to the Acolyte-occupied chambers below. A character with the Track feat who makes a successful Survival check (DC 19) near the small door leading to area **D9** or the two illusory walls finds tracks connecting all three points. Another successful Survival check (DC 29) reveals that the tracks were made by Large creatures with big webbed feet and Medium ones wearing normal boots, and that both routinely pass through here at least once a day.

The skeletons are the remains of trolls hacked down by the Selskar guards and burned with alchemist's fire before they could regenerate. The wreckage of the armory to the east may seem enticing, but nothing worth taking remains there. Only odd pieces of mismatched armor and weapons too rusted or battered to be serviceable remain.

D11. THE GRANARY (CR 6)

This area constitutes part of the tower's supply system.

Four storage chambers line the east wall of this long room. Each is about 15 feet wide and 25 feet long, and its floor is 15 feet deeper than the hallway outside. The hallway and the four storage rooms are finished in crumbling brick.

These four alcoves once held a great store of grain. The Selskaryn did not fear starvation during a siege, since the wizards of the order could easily import foodstuffs via teleportation magic and *portals*, but they did set aside a good amount of food just in case.

Hazard: A 1-foot-thick layer of yellow mold covers the floor of each grain storage chamber. To a casual inspection from the doorway above, the yellow mold looks like soggy grain. Allow any character examining the floor a DC 30 Spot check, or DC 20 Knowledge (dungeoneering) check to identify the mold for what it is. See page 76 in the *DUNGEON MASTER's Guide* for more information on yellow mold.

Development: The secret door (Search DC 30) at the south end of the chamber provides access to the Selskaryn rooms.

D12. FOUNTAIN ROOM

This chamber was a place of meditation for the Selskaryn. The double door leading into this room from the hallway to the east is rusted and stuck.

❖ **Stuck Iron Door:** 2 in. thick; Hardness 10; 60 hp; break DC 28.

In the center of this chamber stands a circular stone fountain about 10 feet across, with a rim about 3 feet high. A small sculpture of a leaping dolphin springs from the center of the fountain. The basin is dry, and it appears to have been that way for some time. A double door leads out of the room to the east, and smaller doors provide egress to the north, west, and south.

Treasure: Hidden in a secret compartment (Search DC 25) in the dolphin statuette is a *decanter of endless water*. On command, it pours fresh water out of the dolphin's mouth and into the fountain at the rate of 5 gallons per round. The overflow drain located on the inner part of the rim, near the top, drains down to the cistern (area D24) if the basin begins to overflow.

D13. GUARDROOM

This chamber once served as a barracks for guards stationed in the tower proper. Ruined wooden furniture and a half-dozen armored, human-sized skeletons litter the floor, and a large, long-limbed skeleton blackened by fire occupies the center of the chamber.

The Acolytes avoid areas D12, D13, and D14. Anything worth looting in those rooms has long since been taken, and they fear the appearance of more restless spirits in the Selskar ruins. The skeletons here, however, are harmless.

D14. DUNGEON (EL 11)

The Selskar guards used this little dungeon to incarcerate common prisoners accused of relatively minor offenses. Those individuals unlucky enough to earn the attention of the Selskar wizards usually wound up in the Cells of Chastisement (area D23).

Like other portions of the plinth, this dungeon has been picked over by generations of adventurers, who have left little behind.

Any character investigating the cells discovers that the doors are locked and stuck. A small viewport in each door allows a person in the corridor to peer inside the cell.

❖ **Cell Door:** 2 in. thick; Hardness 10; 60 hp; break DC 23; Open Lock DC 25.

If anyone looks into the cells, continue with the following:

Peering through the small viewports reveals that two of the cells are empty, three contain one skeleton each, and the middle cell of the south wall contains a skeleton clad in a gleaming breastplate and tattered adventurer's garb, with a sword apparently lying under its body.

Nothing is left alive in this place, but one cell does contain two vengeful undead creatures.

Creatures: The middle cell of the southern row is home to two mohrgs. One is the undead spirit of a brutal murderer who was imprisoned here by the Selskaryn in the final days of the tower. Not knowing the true perfidy of their prisoner, they simply locked him up, ostensibly for a few months. After the fall of the tower, however, he died a lonely and terrible death in his cell.

After its demise, the mohrg roamed the whole plinth for a while, but a party of heroes eventually managed to lock it in this cell, trapping one of their own comrades with it. The mohrg and its spawn have been waiting more than fifteen years for a chance to escape and kill again. The master mohrg is hiding below the door and cannot be seen from the viewport.

❖ **Mohrg:** hp 99; *Monster Manual* 189.

❖ **Mohrg:** hp 87; *Monster Manual* 189. This mohrg wears a +1 *mithral breastplate*, which increases its AC by +6 (29 total).

Tactics: The two mohrgs have readied an ambush. The mohrg spawn, wearing the armor and clothes it died in, lies motionless at the back of the cell in clear view of the viewport, playing dead. The master mohrg crouches below the door, ready to spring on anyone who enters to investigate the unusual corpse. This mohrg gains a +8 bonus on its Hide check because of the improved cover provided by the door.

The mohrgs are desperate to escape the cell, so they both make extreme efforts to force their way out into the hallway before turning on their rescuers. If the chance presents itself, they slam the door on anyone who enters the cell, thereby locking some other unfortunate soul within the prison.

Treasure: The mohrg spawn wears the breastplate described above. It also carries a +2 *longsword* and a leather pouch containing 332 gp and a pair of 50-gp onyxes.

D15. LOWER HALL (EL 12)

This chamber served as the foyer and forehall for the secret rooms of the Selskaryn wizards. The Acolytes use it as a guard-chamber now.

The doors to area D7 stand open, since the slaadi on guard duty here don't want to be surprised by anyone using the *portal*. Read or paraphrase the following when the characters look inside:

Three tall pillars chiseled from red marble support the ceiling of this magnificent hall. The walls are made of glossy gray stone cut in geometric patterns, and the triple-vaulted ceiling rises 25 feet overhead. A hallway leads south through a gilded archway, and double doors of bronze offer egress to the north and west. Smokeless torches in sconces, one mounted on each pillar, illuminate the scene.

Three hulking, froglike creatures occupy this chamber. Two are blue, with sicklelike blades of bone sprouting from their forearms, while the third is a mottled, mossy green color with a huge, pale belly. The green creature towers even over its two companions.

The three slaadi in this room are here to repel intruders. They do not attack Acolytes, but they are quite efficient at guarding against intrusion by other forces.

Creatures: Xorfilstaarg, the green slaad, and his fellows allow a party escorted by Acolytes to pass. If the group does not have Acolyte escorts and a good explanation, however, they attack.

➤ **Blue Slaadi (2):** hp 67, 50; *Monster Manual* 229.

➤ **Xorfilstaarg, Male Advanced Green Slaad:** CR 11; Huge Outsider (chaotic, extraplanar); HD 18d8+108; hp 189; Init +4; Spd 30 ft.; AC 28, touch 9, flat-footed 28; Base Atk +18; Grp +36; Atk +26 melee (1d8+10, claw); Full Atk +26 melee (1d8+10, 2 claws) and +24 melee (4d6+5, bite); Space/Reach 15 ft./15 ft.; SA spell-like abilities, *summon slaad*; SQ change shape, darkvision 60 ft., fast healing 5, outsider traits, resistances (acid 5, cold 5, elec-

tricity 5, fire 5), sonic immunity; AL CN; SV Fort +16, Ref +11, Will +13; Str 31, Dex 11, Con 23, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 12.

Skills: Climb +31, Concentration +21, Diplomacy +8, Hide +13, Jump +31, Listen +21, Move Silently +21, Search +10, Sense Motive +10, Spot +21. **Feats:** Cleave, Great Cleave, Improved Bull Rush, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Multiattack, Power Attack.

See the *Monster Manual*, page 230, for descriptions of green slaad abilities.

Possessions: Bracers of armor +3, ring of protection +1, wand of Aganazzar's scorcher (caster level 7th, 15 charges), key to the gate in area D4 to the Tower of the Star.

Tactics: Xorfilstaarg uses *see invisibility* constantly. He attempts to weaken any group of attackers by using *fear*. Given a chance, he also attempts to ram an enemy into area D7 with Improved Bull Rush, in the hope that an intruder who doesn't know about the portal might inadvertently trigger it. The blue slaadi alternate between melee attacks and well-placed *telekinesis* effects.

If seriously threatened, Xorfilstaarg flees through the archway to the south, intending to circle west to the south door of area D16 and warn Durzuhl of the attack.

Xorfilstaarg and his slaadi go to the assistance of Durzuhl in area D16 if alerted by the sounds of battle there.

Treasure: Xorfilstaarg wears a belt pouch full of gems—loot he collected from his victims over the years. The pouch contains a black star sapphire (4,300 gp); a pair of rubies (1,100 gp each); two topazes (440 gp each); and a dozen lesser stones, (20 gp each).

The Plinth

1 square = 10 feet



D16. ALCHEMISTS' CROFT

The bronze double doors leading into this room from the east and the south are locked.

❖ **Locked Bronze Doors:** 2 in. thick; Hardness 10; 60 hp; break DC 24; Open Lock DC 25.

This long, low room is finished in crumbling red brick. Four thick, square pillars support the low, barrel-vaulted ceiling. Stone workbenches cluttered with old iron cauldrons and glass retorts line the walls. The whole room is illuminated by the angry red glow of braziers filled with hot coals.

One small alcove lies to the north and another to the south. Double doors of bronze offer egress to the south and the east.

Once a Selskaryn lecture hall reserved for demonstrations of alchemy, this room is now the lair of the wizard Durzhul, a durzagon. Durzhul allied himself with Bazim-Gorag's followers two years ago and quickly became one of the cult's leaders. Durzhul's arcane research over the last few months—in particular, his casting of *legend lore* spells and other divinations—revealed the steps necessary to free Bazim-Gorag from his *binding*.

Durzhul spends most of his time in the alchemists' croft, refining his divinations and continuing his research into the details of the Firebringer's prison. Unbeknownst to the other Acolytes, the durzagon is quietly seeking a way to enslave Bazim-Gorag instead of freeing him. The wizard does not intend to set Bazim-Gorag free until he can ensnare the slaad lord and bind him to his own service.

When Durzhul isn't here, he is either conferring with Jendar Tholm in area **D24** or Bazim-Gorag in the latter's prison (your choice).

Durzhul sleeps in the alcove to the east, where he keeps a simple pallet and a trunk full of clothing. The alcove to the west serves as his privy.

Creatures: Two red slaad bodyguards assigned by Jendar Tholm attend Durzhul and assist him with various menial tasks.

➤ **Flame Lord Durzhul, Male Durzagon Wiz13:** CR 17; Medium Outsider (evil, extraplanar, lawful); HD 5d8+25 plus 13d4+65; hp 144; Init +8; Spd 30 ft.; AC 25, touch 16, flat-footed 21; Base Atk +11; Grp +13; Atk +13 melee (1d6+2, claw); Full Atk +13 melee (1d6+2, 2 claws) and +8 melee (1d6+1, bite) and +8 melee (1d3+1, beard); SA beard, poison, spell-like abilities; SQ darkvision 120 ft., DR 10/magic, duergar traits, immunities (paralysis, phantasms, poison), light sensitivity, outsider traits, resistances (acid 20, cold 20, electricity 20, fire 20); SR 15; AL CE; SV Fort +16, Ref +15, Will +16; Str 14, Dex 18, Con 20, Int 25, Wis 12, Cha 6.

Skills: Appraise +15 (+17 alchemy, metal work, stone work), Balance +6, Bluff +6, Concentration +23, Craft (alchemy) +21, Craft (metalworking) +15, Craft (stoneworking) +15, Decipher Script +16, Diplomacy +10, Gather Information +6, Intimidate +8, Jump +4, Knowledge (arcana) +23, Knowledge (the planes) +23, Listen +12, Move Silently +12, Search +16, Sense Motive +9, Spellcraft +25, Spot +12, Tumble +12. **Feats:** Alertness, Blind-Fight, Combat Casting, Craft Wand, Empower Spell, Improved

Initiative, Quicken Spell, Scribe Scroll, Spell Focus (Evocation), Spell Penetration, Still Spell.

Beard (Ex): If Durzhul hits a single opponent with both claw attacks, he automatically hits with his beard as well.

Poison (Ex): Durzhul's poison (Fort DC 17) is delivered with each successful beard attack. The initial damage is 1d4 points of Strength damage, and the secondary damage is 1d2 points of Strength drain.

Spell-Like Abilities: 3/day—darkness; 1/day—desecrate, enlarge (self only), invisibility, unholy blight. Caster level 10th; save DC 8 + spell level.

Duergar Traits: Durzhul gains a +1 bonus on attack rolls against orcs and goblinoids, a +2 bonus on Will saves against spells and spell-like abilities, and a +4 dodge bonus against giants. He also has stonecunning (+2 racial bonus on checks to notice unusual stonework; intuit depth).

Light Sensitivity (Ex): Exposure to bright light (such as sunlight or a *daylight* spell) imposes a –2 circumstance penalty on Durzhul's attack rolls.

Wizard Spells Prepared (4/6/6/6/5/4/3/2; base save DC = 17 + spell level; 10% chance of arcane spell failure): 0—detect magic, light, mage hand, mending, open/close, prestidigitation, ray of frost, read magic; 1st—charm person, expeditious retreat, grease, magic missile ×2, shield; 2nd—blur, bull's strength, invisibility, see invisibility, Snilloc's snowball swarm^{ast}, web; 3rd—dispel magic, displacement, fly, haste, lightning bolt^{ast}, stilled Aganazzar's scorcher^{ast}; 4th—confusion, dimension door, phantasmal killer, stilled fireball^{ast}, wall of ice; 5th—cone of cold^{ast}, hold monster, stilled Evard's black tentacles, teleport; 6th—chain lightning^{ast}, empowered enervation, repulsion; 7th—Mordenkainen's sword, quickened blacklight^{ast}.

Spellbooks: Durzhul's spellbooks contain all the spells he has prepared, plus the following: 0—all; 1st—alarm, comprehend languages, disguise self, identify, protection from chaos, protection from evil, protection from good, protection from law, true strike; 2nd—arcane lock, bear's endurance, continual flame^{ast}, knock, summon swarm; 3rd—halt undead, summon monster III; 4th—enervation, greater invisibility, scrying, stoneskin; 5th—sending^{ast}; 6th—globe of invulnerability, greater dispel magic, summon monster VI; 7th—banishment, prismatic spray^{ast}.

^{ast}Evocation spell. The base save DC for these spells is 18 + spell level.

[†]See the FORGOTTEN REALMS Campaign Setting. If you're not running this adventure in the Realms, substitute another spell of the same level.

Possessions: +4 mithral shirt, +2 ring of protection, cloak of resistance +3, bracers of health +2, headband of intellect +4, wand of fireball (caster level 5th; 32 charges), key to the gate in area **D4** in the Tower of the Star.

➤ **Red Slaadi (2):** hp 52 each; *Monster Manual*, 228.

Tactics: If alerted to the approach of intruders, Durzhul prepares for combat by casting *displacement*, *shield*, *see invisibility*, *expeditious retreat*, and *haste* (on his bodyguards) in that order. While the slaadi leap into melee or try to incapacitate foes with their stunning croaks, Durzhul blasts away at intruders with his quickened *blacklight* spell, using the pillars in the room for cover while

his foes blunder about in the dark. He is not concerned about catching his slaadi bodyguards in the *blacklight* or any other spell effect. The durzagon saves his *teleport* as an ace in the hole, using it to escape if the battle goes against him.

Development: If forced to flee, Durzbul *teleports* to Jendar Tholm's chamber in area **D24**. The durzagon is not willing to stand and die in the alchemists'croft to protect his belongings—he figures that he can easily return in a month or two and resume his work after any crusading heroes have come and gone.

Treasure: Durzbul has a locked iron chest (Open Lock DC 30) for which he keeps the only key in his sleeping area. The chest contains 4,400 gp, 225 pp, a fire opal pendant on a fine gold chain (1,700 gp), and a pouch of gemstones, including a purple corundum (1,100 gp), three red spinels (140 gp each), and fifteen smaller stones (10 gp each).

A stack of papers on one of the workbenches includes Durzbul's notes about the Firebringer's prison. These notes, written in Abyssal, reveal the details of the rite of unbinding, as described in the sidebar on page 20.

D17. WELL OF STARS (EL 10)

This sheer shaft descends hundreds of feet into the heart of the hill, providing access to the cistern level and the prison. The bottom of the shaft comes out in area **D28**, the Vault of Stars, which is 200 feet below the mouth of the well.

A strange sense of hushed power seems to hang over this octagonal room. Its only feature is a 20-foot-diameter well that occupies the center of the chamber. Its sides are finished in glossy black tile flecked with tiny chips of glittering white. Bright, blue-white motes of light drift lazily within the well, reflecting off the white flecks in the walls. The dark shaft descends quite a distance—in fact, its bottom is not visible at all. Two passageways offer egress to the south and the west.

The dwarves who first delved in this hill over two thousand years ago dug the Well of Stars to serve as one of the main corridors within their underground citadel. The Selskaryn added three powerful magical effects to the excavation, as follows.

Levitation: Any creature within the shaft that has an Intelligence score is affected as if by a *levitate* spell (caster level

20th). The creature can ascend or descend, as per the spell, but the effect lasts only as long as the creature remains within the well.

Illumination: Each of the bright motes produces as much light as a candle, and dozens of them drift about the shaft. About half of the well is illuminated at any given moment.

Trap: The bright motes also constitute a deadly magic trap. Each round that a creature remains in the shaft but is not constantly in contact with the wall, there is a 50% chance that a mote appears and attempts a melee touch attack.

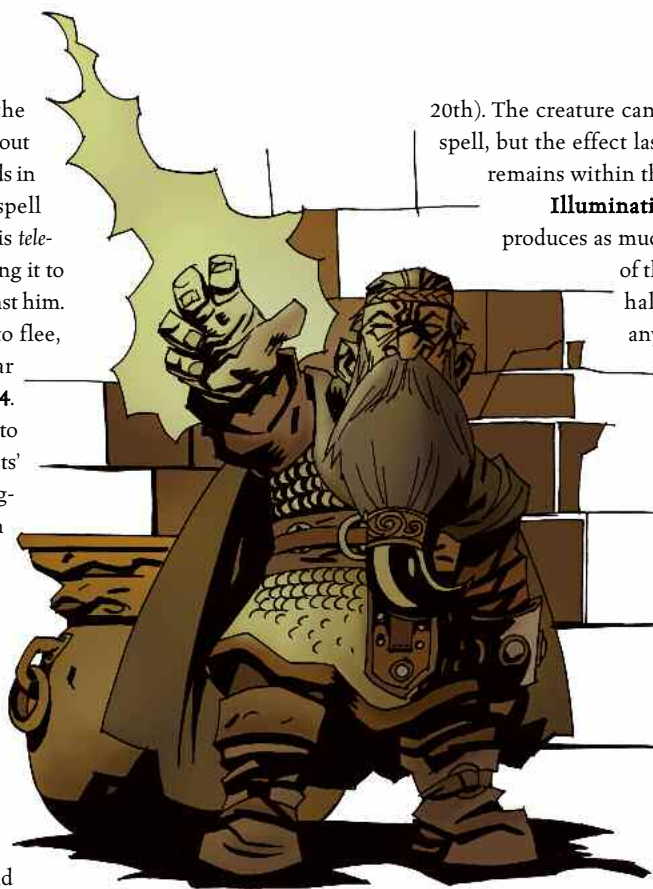
Success means the target gains fast healing 5 as long as it remains within the shaft. Each mote that touches the target in subsequent rounds increases the rate of fast healing by an additional 5 points, so a character who has been touched by three motes has fast healing 15 inside the shaft.

After the target creature reaches full hit points, the fast healing begins to confer temporary hit points at the same rate. This effect may not appear to be a problem at first, but too much positive energy is decidedly unhealthy. Each round that the affected creature's temporary hit points exceed its hit point total, it must make a successful Fortitude save (DC 20) or be burned to fine white ash by the accumulation of positive energy. When an affected creature exits the Well of Stars, the fast healing effect ends and any temporary hit points accumulated vanish at the rate of 10 per round.

The trick to negotiating the well safely is to trail one hand along the wall of the shaft constantly, remaining "grounded" from the positive energy motes. Any character who studies the phenomenon of the motes can attempt a DC 25 Knowledge (the planes) check to recognize them as positive energy, and a DC 34 Spellcraft check to observe that they do not contact the shaft walls. A character who succeeds at both of these checks automatically deduces that remaining in contact with the wall might be a way to avoid them. The Acolytes all know how to use the well safely.

DM Tip: If the players do not specify whether their characters are touching the wall of the shaft or not, assume that any character who is flying or using the shaft's levitation power has a 25% chance of being in contact with the wall throughout any given round, and anyone who uses a rope to climb up or down is automatically in contact with the wall the entire time.

➤ **Positive Energy Motes Trap:** CR 10; magic device; touch trigger (attached); automatic reset; Atk +10 melee touch (fast



healing +5, positive energy, death if temporary hp in excess of normal, Fort DC 20 negates); Search DC 34; Disable Device DC —; Spellcraft DC 34.

Creatures: If the party has not yet encountered the two Selskar watchghosts roaming this level, they appear in the chamber at the top of the Well of Stars before the party goes down the shaft. The watchghosts do not enter the well because they cannot abide the touch of the energy motes.

➤ **Selskar Watchghosts (2):** hp 52 each; see area D5.

Development: A small iron door is set into the east wall of the shaft, about 30 feet below the top. This door is easily visible to anyone inside the well. It is locked (Open Lock DC 30) but not rusted or stuck. Jendar Tholm (see area D24) carries the only key.

D18. THE CLOSE OF STARS (EL 17)

This chamber once served as the secret close, or meeting-hall, of the Selskar Order. It is haunted by the ghost of the Magus Nemehl, who was second only to the Ar-Magus Ilviroon among the Selskaryn. The doors leading into this room are not locked, but they are old and stuck.

❖ **Stuck Iron Doors:** 1 in. thick; Hardness 10; 30 hp; break DC 23.

Read or paraphrase the following aloud when the PCs look into this room.

Gold-flecked red stone circles this magnificent chamber, and a carved decorative frieze rings it in a band about 10 feet above the floor. Eight pillars of red marble support a ceiling made of inky black stone set with chips of glittering white to resemble a starry sky. The floor, some 40 feet below the ceiling, is made of glossy tiles in a pattern of red, black, gold, and white. Double doors of bronze provide egress to the north and east, and a smaller door leads off to the west. Near the southern wall is a small dais, and long benches of gleaming dark wood stand along the east, west, and south walls.

Signs of ancient battle scar the room's beauty. A dozen or so skeletons lie scattered about, some in rusted armor, others unarmored. The frieze seems to have been damaged in spots by powerful impacts, and the bench to the west is a charred ruin.

The benches are segregated from one another by ornately carved rails, and their backs are more than 6 feet tall. Full mem-

bers of the Selskar Order were allotted seats along the side walls, and the leaders sat along the back wall, overlooking the dais.

The frieze begins 10 feet above the floor and ends 20 feet above it, circling the entire room. A successful DC 10 Knowledge (history) or Knowledge (arcana) check identifies the subject matter as the fall of Netheril. In the center of the dais is a secret trapdoor (Search DC 30) that leads down to area D26 in the cistern level.

Adventurers long ago took any items of value from this chamber.

Creatures: The ghost of Nemehl spends almost all of his time here in ethereal form, lost in his memories and anguish. Nemehl was a Magus of the Selskar Order, one of the four chief officers ranking just below the Ar-Magus Ilviroon. Nemehl briefly ruled as ar-magus in the final days of the Selskaryn, after Ilviroon had perished. When the tower fell, Nemehl retired to the secret wizards' chambers within the plinth and made his last stand here, accompanied by a dozen of the surviving mages and their guards. Nemehl was slain after casting only a few of his mighty spells.

Despite his evil inclination, Nemehl is not necessarily hostile to intruders. He wants nothing more than to be laid to rest, and he cannot rest until his remains are interred with the *scepter of the ar-magus* in area D27 and Bazim-Gorag is destroyed. The magus views the slaad lord's intransigence as the chief cause of the Selskar Order's fall, and he must see the Firebringer punished. Nemehl's mortal remains are in this room, and he can point them out to the characters.

The Magus Nemehl is bound to the spot of his death, and he cannot leave the Close of Stars. When adventurers appear here, Nemehl manifests and addresses the party in ancient Loross. Read or paraphrase the following:

An unnatural chill seems to settle over the room as a spectral form materializes atop the dais. The translucent form is that of a regal human wizard dressed in rich robes of ancient design. He has a shaven head, a long, drooping mustache, and piercing eyes that fix on you as he speaks in an icy, whispering tone.

Any character who speaks Loross (High Netherese) or has the means to understand the ghost's speech understands the following communication. All other characters hear meaningless gibberish.

WHAT NEMEHL KNOWS

The Magus Nemehl knows all the details of the tower's fall and can describe how the Company of the Riven Orb came to open the path to the slaad lord's lair. He can also relate the efforts the Acolytes have made to open the Firebringer's prison, as described in the "Background" section.

If the PCs can change his attitude to friendly and convince him of their ability to prevail against Bazim-Gorag, Nemehl arms them with the following critical pieces of information, with or without their specific requests for it.

- The characters need protection against fire.
- The characters need weapons of exceptional quality (magic).
- The slaad lord has two heads that make him exceptionally resistant to enchantment spells.
- Bazim-Gorag is unable to harm anyone who is not within his hedged prison.

Nemehl also knows about the *+4 frost brand greataxe* inside the terra cotta statue in area D19, but he does not volunteer this information unless he is absolutely convinced that the heroes can and will make use of that weapon against Bazim-Gorag.

The ghost is speaking Loross, otherwise known as High Netherese. "Defile not the Close of Stars, interlopers," he says in a cold, harsh voice. "Here the might and glory of the Selskaryn came to its end, as all things must in time. Bow your heads in reverence, and consider well the futility of mortal achievements."

If attacked, Nemehl responds in kind. He is arrogant and cruel, and he has no patience for characters who demonstrate that they would rather fight than talk.

If none of the heroes can understand Nemehl's speech, the ghost concludes that they are more likely to free Bazim-Gorag inadvertently than to destroy him, so they are a liability that should be eliminated. (See **Tactics**, below, if the ghost attacks.)

➤ **Nemehl, Magus of Selskar, Male Human Ghost Wiz15 (against material opponents):** CR 17; Medium Undead (human, incorporeal); HD 15d12; hp 97; Init +5; Spd fly 30 ft. (perfect); AC 15, touch 15, flat-footed 14; Base Atk +7, Grp —; Atk/Full Atk +8 melee touch (by spell) or +8 ranged touch (by spell); SA corrupting gaze (DC 21), telekinesis (DC 21); SQ incorporeal subtype, manifestation, rejuvenation, turn resistance +4, undead traits; AL NE; SV Fort +9, Ref +8, Will +13; Str —, Dex 12, Con —, Int 22, Wis 10, Cha 18.

Skills: Appraise +8, Concentration +22, Craft (alchemy) +24, Diplomacy +14, Hide +9, Knowledge (arcana) +24, Listen +8, Search +14, Sense Motive +9, Spellcraft +26, Spot +8. **Feats:** Brew Potion, Craft Wondrous Item, Empower Spell, Forge Ring, Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Leadership, Scribe Scroll, Spell Focus (Evocation), Spell Penetration.

Wizard Spells Prepared (4/6/6/5/5/5/4/2/1; base save DC = 16 + spell level): 0—*detect magic* ×3, *read magic*; 1st—*burning hands**, *charm person*, *mage armor*, *magic missile* ×2, *shield*; 2nd—*flaming sphere**, *invisibility*, *scorching ray* ×2, *see invisibility*, *web*; 3rd—*dispel magic*, *fireball** ×2, *haste*, *suggestion*; 4th—*dimension door*, *fear*, *fire shield*, *greater invisibility*, *wall of fire**; 5th—*dismissal*, *hold monster*, *teleport*, *wall of force*; 6th—*disintegrate*, *repulsion*, *true seeing*; 7th—*prismatic spray**, *reverse gravity*; 8th—*horrid wilting*.

Possessions (all ethereal): *headband of intellect* +4, *cloak of resistance* +2.

*Evocation spells. The base save DC for these spells is 17 + spell level.

➤ **Nemehl, Magus of Selskar, Male Human Ghost Wiz15 (against ethereal opponents):** CR 17; Medium Undead; HD 15d12; hp 97; Init +5; Spd fly 30 ft. (perfect); AC 11, touch 11, flat-footed 10; Base Atk +7; Grp +6; Atk/Full Atk +6 melee touch (by spell) or +8 ranged touch (by spell); SA corrupting gaze, telekinesis; SQ manifestation, rejuvenation, turn resistance +4, undead traits; AL NE; SV Fort +9, Ref +8, Will +13; Str 8, Dex 12, Con —, Int 22, Wis 10, Cha 18.

See the *Monster Manual* for details on ghost special abilities.

If the heroes make an effort to communicate with the ghost, his attitude begins as unfriendly (see the Diplomacy skill description in the *Player's Handbook*). He treats the newcomers as ignorant fools and rambles on about the lost glory of Selskar. However, if the heroes can alter his attitude to friendly and con-

vince him that they are not only enemies of the Acolytes but also capable of taking on a major challenge, Nemehl tries to persuade them to bring him the scepter and destroy Bazim-Gorag. He points out that the Acolytes will mostly likely set Bazim-Gorag loose on Faerûn soon. Even if the characters bury the Well of Stars in rubble, sooner or later the Firebringer's minions will excavate a path to the slaad lord's lair and resume their attempts to free him. If this line of persuasion does not sway the heroes, Nemehl tells them that Bazim-Gorag has collected a significant amount of treasure in his prison. (This statement counts as a lie for the purpose of detection, since Nemehl has no idea whether it's true.)

In general, the ghost is domineering, evil, and manipulative, but he willingly aids the heroes with information if he thinks they can take on Bazim-Gorag and win. In life, Nemehl participated in the *binding* ritual that imprisoned Bazim-Gorag, and he can describe the slaad lord's powers and abilities in detail (see the "What Nemehl Knows" sidebar).

Tactics: Nemehl cannot leave area **D18**, although he can shift to the Ethereal Plane or manifest in the Material Plane as long as he remains in that room. Against attackers he views as impudent (as opposed to dangerous) he simply blasts away with his corrupting gaze and telekinesis abilities. Dangerous foes merit his full arsenal of spells. In this case, Nemehl tries to catch as many enemies as possible in an area spell while lashing out with his telekinesis ability each round as a free action. If the opportunity presents itself, he uses a wall spell to divide his enemies and then flits back and forth ethereally between the groups, attacking each in turn.

Nemehl cares nothing for his own well-being because he knows that he will almost certainly rejuvenate if destroyed in battle.

Special: Award the players one-half the normal experience for defeating Nemehl or for successfully negotiating with him, but withhold the rest of the XP award until the ghost is laid to rest.

Development: If Nemehl is destroyed and rejuvenates, his attitude becomes hostile. He does not necessarily attack the characters on sight, but he begins any subsequent encounter by berating them and demanding their immediate cooperation.

D19. TROPHY ROOM (EL 12)

The Selskaryn stored some of their order's most impressive treasures in this chamber. Thus, they felt the need to defend it well.

Trap: The doors leading into the trophy room are locked and stuck. Each is also trapped with a *symbol of sleep* that affects any creature passing through the door. The *symbol* is prominently placed on each door, and all of them are attuned to the wizards of the Selskaryn Order.

❏ **Locked, Stuck Iron Doors:** 1 in. thick; Hardness 10, 30 hp; break DC 23; Open Lock DC 30.

➤ **Symbol of Sleep Trap:** CR 6; spell; spell trigger; no reset; spell effect (*symbol of sleep*, sleep; 9th-level wizard; Will DC 17 negates); Search DC —; Disable Device DC 30.

Read or paraphrase the following when the characters enter:

This hall is a majestic chamber almost 30 feet high, with two pillars of red-gold marble supporting the ceiling. The walls are ringed by a frieze 10 feet above the floor, over which hang the ruined tatters of proud banners and standards. Pedestals on the floor support various art objects and trophies, including two suits of armor, a large vase of gold-green stone, a bronze urn, a terra cotta statue of an ancient dwarf warrior, and various other old treasures. A number of other places where items might once have rested are bare.

Harska Thaug's troops never found the secret rooms of the Selskaryn, so the mages' trophy room was not pillaged by the invaders. One of the wizards who escaped from the sack of the tower later returned and removed many of the more valuable trophies from the hall, leaving behind only those items that he could not easily carry himself.

The frieze in this room depicts the founding of Ascalhorn by survivors of the fall of Netheril and the Ascalhorn's rise as a great power in the North.

Creature: One of the suits of armor is actually a helmed horror—a construct created to guard this room centuries ago. The creature does not react to casual inspection of the room and its contents, but if anyone other than a Selskar wizard attempts to remove or damage any of the items displayed, the creature attacks.

➤ **Advanced Helmed Horror:** CR 12; Medium Construct; HD 20d10; hp 130; Init +3; Spd 30 ft., air walk 30 ft.; AC 23, touch 11, flat-footed 22; Base Atk +15; Grp +20; Atk +22 melee (2d6+9/19–20, +2 greatsword); Full Atk +22/+17/+12 melee (2d6+9/19–20, +2 greatsword) or +18 ranged (1d10/19–20, heavy crossbow); SA weapon power; SQ air walk, construct traits, darkvision 60 ft., *feather fall*, low-light vision, see invisibility, spell immunities, weapon power; AL N; SV Fort +6, Ref +9, Will +10; Str 20, Dex 17, Con —, Int —, Wis 18, Cha 12.

Air Walk (Ex): The helmed horror can use *air walk* (self only) as the spell (caster level 20th).

Feather Fall (Sp): The helmed horror can use *feather fall* at will as a free action, as the spell (caster level 20th).

See Invisibility (Su): A helmed horror sees invisible objects and creatures naturally, as if it always benefited from the *see invisibility* spell.

Spell Immunities (Ex): The helmed horror is immune to *disintegrate*, *lightning bolt*, *magic missile*, and *prismatic spray*.

Weapon Power (Su): As a free action, the helmed horror can confer the shock special ability on any melee weapon it wields. The weapon loses its special ability when not in the helmed horror's grasp.

Possessions: +4 full plate armor, +2 greatsword, ring of protection +2. The helmed horror's magic armor is destroyed when the monster is defeated.

Tactics: The helmed horror makes good use of its *air walk* ability if confronted by flying foes. It does not pursue any intruders who leave the room.

Treasure: The Selskar wizard who returned to the tower did not remove the heavier items of value. The life-sized terra cotta dwarf

is worth 3,000 gp and weighs 300 pounds, but a +4 *frost brand greataxe* has been baked inside it. This weapon functions exactly like the *frost brand* specific weapon, except that it is a greataxe. A *detect magic* cast on the statue reveals the axe's magic, but the statue must be broken (hardness 2, 25 hp) to remove the weapon.

The room also contains a very large vase finished in a malachite glaze and gold enamel (8,700 gp) that weighs 250 pounds and is somewhat fragile. A +3 full plate of spell resistance (15) and a heavy bronze urn (800 gp) filled with the dust of the arch-lich Uxol Thosk, whom the Selskaryn defeated, round out the room's valuables.

D20. THE CONJURY (EL 17)

The Selskaryn wizards used this room to teach summoning and binding spells to junior members of the order. A powerful undead creature, still bound to its centuries-old duty, guards the room against intruders.

The doors leading to this room are locked and stuck. The Acolytes forced their way in a couple of years ago and quickly learned to leave the conjury alone.

🔒 **Locked, Stuck Iron Doors:** 1 in. thick; Hardness 10; 30 hp; break DC 23; Open Lock DC 30.

Four stone columns surround a sunken area in the center of this hall. Old stone steps between each pair descend about 5 feet from the hall's level to the sunken part of the room. With the exception of the central indentation, the room is floored and finished in crumbling old brick and is bare of all other features.

Within the sunken area, a complex summoning diagram has been inlaid into the smooth, bare stone. A towering, armored figure carrying a pair of flails stands motionless in the center of the diagram.

The pattern in the floor is a permanent calling diagram of silver inlaid in the stone floor (see *Schools of Magic* in Chapter 10 of the *Player's Handbook*). It grants all the advantages normally conferred by a successfully scribed calling diagram. The Selskaryn were careful to keep this room free of furnishings and materials that might inadvertently be dropped across the pattern.

Creature: The monstrous figure standing in the room's center is a deathbringer, a powerful undead monster summoned by the Selskaryn to guard their secret chambers. The deathbringer is under orders to attack any creature other than a Selskar wizard that enters the room.

➤ **Deathbringer:** CR 17; Large Undead; HD 30d12; hp 195; Init +3; Spd 40 ft.; AC 33, touch 10, flat-footed 32; Base Atk +15; Grp +24; Atk +16 melee (2d6+5/19–20, Large flail); Full Atk +16/+11/+6 melee (2d6+5/19–20, Large flail) and +16 melee (2d6+2/19–20, Large flail) or +19 melee (1d8+5, 2 slams); Space/Reach 10 ft./10 ft.; SA *greater dispel magic*, negative burst, trample 2d4+7; SQ darkvision 60 ft., undead traits; AL NE; SV Fort +10, Ref +12, Will +19; Str 20, Dex 15, Con —, Int 13, Wis 14, Cha 7.

Skills: Intimidate +31, Jump +36, Listen +35, Move Silently +29, Spot +35. **Feats:** Blind-Fight, Cleave, Combat Reflexes, Great

Cleave, Improved Bull Rush, Improved Critical (heavy flail), Improved Sunder, Power Attack, Two-Weapon Defense, Two-Weapon Fighting, Weapon Focus (heavy flail).

Greater Dispel Magic (Sp): A deathbringer can produce a greater dispel magic effect at will (caster level 20th).

Negative Burst (Su): A deathbringer can release a silent burst of negative energy at a range of up to 100 feet. The burst has a 20-foot radius and deals 1d8+10 points of negative energy damage to each living creature in the area (Will DC 23 half). This effect heals the deathbringer and any other undead within the area of as much damage as it would otherwise deal. Once a deathbringer releases a negative burst, it must wait 1d4 rounds before it can do so again.

Trample (Ex): As a standard action during its turn each round, a deathbringer can trample Medium or smaller opponents. This attack deals 2d4+7 points of bludgeoning damage. A trampled opponent can attempt either an attack of opportunity at a –4 penalty or a DC 30 Reflex save for half damage.

Tactics: The deathbringer is clever enough to wait motionlessly in the center of the calling diagram, in hopes that intruders might mistakenly conclude that it was conjured and bound there. It waits until the characters move within range of a sudden charge, then launches an attack.

Development: If the deathbringer is defeated, the conjury becomes a secure place to camp, since none of the dungeon's denizens dare enter the room.

CISTERN AND CRYPT LEVEL

About 40 feet below the plinth (and a good 70 feet below the ruined tower) lies the cistern level, which houses the deepest dungeons of the old citadel.

Doors in the cistern level are made of iron plate mounted on iron frames, with pintle hinges. Most are badly rusted and difficult to open, although the door to area **D24** is in better shape and opens easily.

❖ **Stuck Iron Door:** 1 in. thick; Hardness 10; 30 hp; break DC 23.

D21. THE DWARFHOLD

This hall was the deepest common area of the old dwarven citadel. The stairway leads up to area **D10** in the plinth.

Smokeless, flickering torches illuminate this wide hallway. To the north, a stairway climbs steeply up into darkness. A small passageway leads off to the east, and two more to the south. At the east end of the hall, a large double door made of bronze stands in an alcove; at the west end, a single door built of rusted iron plate stands in another. The room is dressed in old brick, and heavy, square columns support a low, 10-foot-high barrel-vaulted ceiling.

Four sticks bearing *continual flame* spells are wedged into old sconces at the spots marked on the map.

The Acolytes regularly traverse the area that connects the stairway, area **D24**, and area **D17**. A character with the Track feat

who succeeds at a DC 19 Survival check near those points finds their tracks. A second successful DC 29 Survival check reveals that the traffic here is usually light, and that it consists of Medium and Large creatures with webbed feet, as well as booted humanoids.

D22. ICE CELLARS

In the tower's heyday, these rooms were ice cellars. In earlier times, slabs of ice were cut from the nearby lake in wintertime and stored in these silos. In the warmer months, the stored ice was used to refrigerate perishables. Nothing of interest is left in these cellars now.

D23. CELLS OF CHASTISEMENT (EL 8)

Those unfortunate enough to earn the ire of the Selskar wizards sometimes found their way to this grim chamber. The Cells of Chastisement, as the Selskaryn called them, are 20-foot deep cells only 5 feet square, in which solitary prisoners were confined until they died or went mad. Each cell is covered by an iron grate, which can be reinforced with a thick iron bar and a padlock. The door to this room is locked (Open Lock DC 30), but not rusted.

Four of the cells are empty, and four others contain the moldering remains of long-dead prisoners. Two, however, are currently occupied. If the party chased Moskogg away from the barracks house in Selskar Vale, the half-fiend is also here.

Read or paraphrase the following when the characters reach this area, adjusting as needed if Moskogg is present:

Heavy square grates of iron lie in even rows across the floor of this chamber, apparently covering dark cells or pits. A rumpled square of canvas lies over one of the grates. Rusted bolts and heaps of chain are scattered at odd intervals on the floor beside the old brick walls. The air here is rank and damp.

If the PCs bring a light into this room, or make any significant amount of noise, continue with the following:

The oppressive silence of the room is shattered by a horrible, piteous wailing from one of the cells in the floor. "Help me! Gods, help me! Get me out! I will do it! I will do it, I beg you, just let me out!" the voice cries, just before dissolving into manic laughter. Another voice joins in, burbling with lunacy. "Help me, heh! Heh! Get you in, get you in! There's one for all of you, heh! We all are in need of chastisement, heh!"

Both voices continue in this manner until the PCs either take action to aid one or the other, or leave the room.

❖ **Iron Grate:** 2 in. thick; Hardness 10; 30 hp; Strength DC 13 to lift. Anyone trying to push the grate open from the inside takes a –4 circumstance penalty on the check because of the awkward pose. The grate can also be reinforced with a thick iron bar and padlock, though none are so arranged now.



Creatures: Unless Moskogg is here, the only occupants of the chamber are the two prisoners. The occupant of the east cell in the north row is Philosten (NG male human Sor10), an adventurer who was captured by the Acolytes several tendays ago. Durzhul and Jendar Tholm hope that Philosten can be compelled to participate in the rite of unbinding, but he has thus far refused to go along with it, so the Acolytes have interred him here until he becomes more cooperative. On the verge of madness, Philosten gibbers and howls piteously for help whenever he hears someone above, and sometimes when he doesn't. His is the first voice.

The west cell in the middle row (the one covered by the canvas) is occupied by a bodak, the hateful remnant of a wretch interred here by the Selskaryn hundreds of years ago. Whenever Philosten starts up, the bodak apes his cries and pleas in its cold, horrid voice—a practice that has contributed to Philosten's current distress. If Philosten is quiet, the bodak torments its unseen cellmate by droning on in a horrible, vacuous singsong voice for hours, promising death in a thousand ways. The second voice belongs to this creature.

A successful DC 15 Listen check identifies the cell from which each voice emanates. Philosten is virtually helpless and could not menace the heroes if he wanted to—the Acolytes broke all his fingers and took all of his belongings. The bodak, however, waits eagerly for someone to remove the canvas from atop its grate so that it can attack.

➤ **Bodak:** hp 62; *Monster Manual* 28.

Tactics: If someone removes the canvas from the bodak's cell, the monster immediately uses its gaze attack against its would-

be rescuer. Anyone standing atop the bodak's grate, or adjacent to it, is within range of this attack. A character firing missiles or casting spells down at the bodak cannot get a clear shot without being exposed to the monster's gaze. Furthermore, the creature has cover (+4 bonus to AC, +2 bonus on Reflex saves) against anyone trying to attack it from a position next to the grate.

Development: Philosten has been badly shaken by his experiences in the ruined citadel. He has no interest in joining the PCs in destroying Bazim-Gorag, although he is grateful for their assistance.

D24. LAIR OF THE HIGH CONFLAGRATION (EL 17)

Once the cistern of the tower, this room has been converted into the personal quarters of High Conflagration Jendar Tholm, leader of the Acolytes.

The door to this room is locked from the inside (Open Lock DC 30), but it opens easily once unlocked.

A great, dark pool of water fills most of this low-ceilinged hall. Burning brands float atop the still, black waters. Several square columns dot the chamber, rising out of the water to meet the ceiling. Broad steps of moss-covered stone lead down to the water's edge, and across the chamber another set of steps leads up out of the pool to the other side of the hall. A wooden table and a pair of large chairs furnish that area. A hulking troll in chainmail looms near the chamber's door. Across the pool, a man with a shaven head wearing robes of iridescent green sits at the table, examining documents. A sheathed longsword lies across the table within easy reach.

The troll, whose name is Hoorg, serves as Jendar's bodyguard. If the heroes try to force the door, the troll notices and warns the Jendar. The characters try the door stealthily and then try to pick the lock, Hoorg may attempt a DC 16 Listen check to notice the sound. He is almost certain to hear a loud conversation just outside the door (Listen DC 11).

The pool is about 5 feet deep. Wading through it reduces a character's speed to one-half normal. (Jendar uses his *fly* spell to cross and sometimes assists visitors with the same spell.) The surface of the water is covered with slicks of oil that can easily be set ablaze, but the burning torches floating in the water are simply sticks with *continual flame* spells upon them that cannot ignite the oil. If any fire effect touches the surface of the pool, the oil ignites, dealing 1d6 points of fire damage per round to every creature in the water or within 5 feet of the surface (Reflex DC 15 half). The slicks burn for 10 rounds before all the oil is used up.

Creatures: Jendar Tholm is a death slaad, but he usually adopts human form when dealing with his minions. As the leader of the Acolytes, he could certainly arrange more luxurious quarters if he wished, but his needs are few, and he enjoys this chamber.

Hoorg Bloodwine is Jendar's bodyguard, a slavishly loyal bruiser who eagerly tears into any intruders at a single telepathic command from the slaad.



➤ **Hoorg Bloodwine, Male Troll Bbn6:** CR 11; Large Giant; HD 6d8+48 plus 6d12+48; hp 162; Init +1; Spd 30 ft. (+2 *chainmail*), base 40 ft.; AC 22, touch 10, flat-footed 21; Base Atk +10; Grp +23; Atk +18 melee (1d8+13/×3, Large shortspear); Full Atk +19 melee (1d6+9/19–20, 2 claws) and +13 melee (1d6+4, bite) or +18/+13 melee (1d8+13/×3, Large shortspear) and +13 melee (1d6+4, bite); Space/Reach 10 ft./10 ft.; SA rend 2d6+13; SQ darkvision 90 ft., fast movement, illiteracy, improved uncanny dodge, low-light vision, rage 2/day, regeneration 5, scent, trap sense +2, uncanny dodge; AL CE; SV Fort +18, Ref +5, Will +4; Str 28, Dex 12, Con 26, Int 8, Wis 7, Cha 9.

Skills: Climb +9, Jump +9, Listen +8, Spot +8. **Feats:** Alertness, Improved Critical (claw), Iron Will, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (claw).

Rage (Ex): Twice per day, Hoorg can fly into a barbarian rage. While raging, his statistics change as follows: HD 6d8+60 plus 6d12+60; hp 186; AC 20, touch 8, flat-footed 19; Grp +25; Atk +20 melee (1d8+16/×3, shortspear); Full Atk +21 melee (1d6+11/19–20, 2 claws) and +15 melee (1d6+5, bite) or +20/+15 melee (1d8+16/×3, shortspear); SA rend 2d6+16; SV Fort +20, Will

+6; Str 32, Con 30; Climb +11, Jump +11. His rage lasts for 13 rounds.

See the *Monster Manual*, page 247, for troll special abilities.

Possessions: Large +2 *chainmail*, Large shortspear, ring of minor fire resistance, potion of invisibility, sack with 230 gp, 11 pp, and 3 emeralds worth 110 gp each.

➤ **High Conflagration Jendar Tholm, Male Advanced Death Slaad:** CR 16; Medium Outsider (chaotic, extraplanar); HD 20d8+100; hp 190; Init +9; Spd 30 ft.; AC 34, touch 18, flat-footed 29; Base Atk +20; Grp +27; Atk +29 melee (1d8+12/19–20, +2 *longsword*); Full Atk +29/+24/+19/+14 melee (1d8+12/19–20, +2 *longsword*) and +25 melee (2d10+3, bite), or +27 melee (3d6+7 plus stun, 2 claws) and +25 melee (2d10+3, bite); SA spell-like abilities, stun (DC 25), *summon slaad*; SQ change shape, darkvision 60 ft., DR 10/lawful, fast healing 5, outsider traits, resistances (acid 5, cold 5, electricity 5, fire 5), sonic immunity, telepathy 100 ft.; AL CE; SV Fort +19, Ref +19, Will +19; Str 24, Dex 20, Con 21, Int 16, Wis 20, Cha 18.

Skills: Climb +30, Concentration +14, Diplomacy +15, Escape Artist +28, Hide +28, Jump +27, Knowledge (arcana) +26, Knowledge (the planes) +26, Listen +23, Move

Silently +28, Search +26, Sense Motive +23, Spot +23. **Feats:** Cleave, Dodge, Expertise, Improved Initiative, Improved Trip, Multiattack, Power Attack.

See the *Monster Manual*, page 231, for death slaad special abilities.

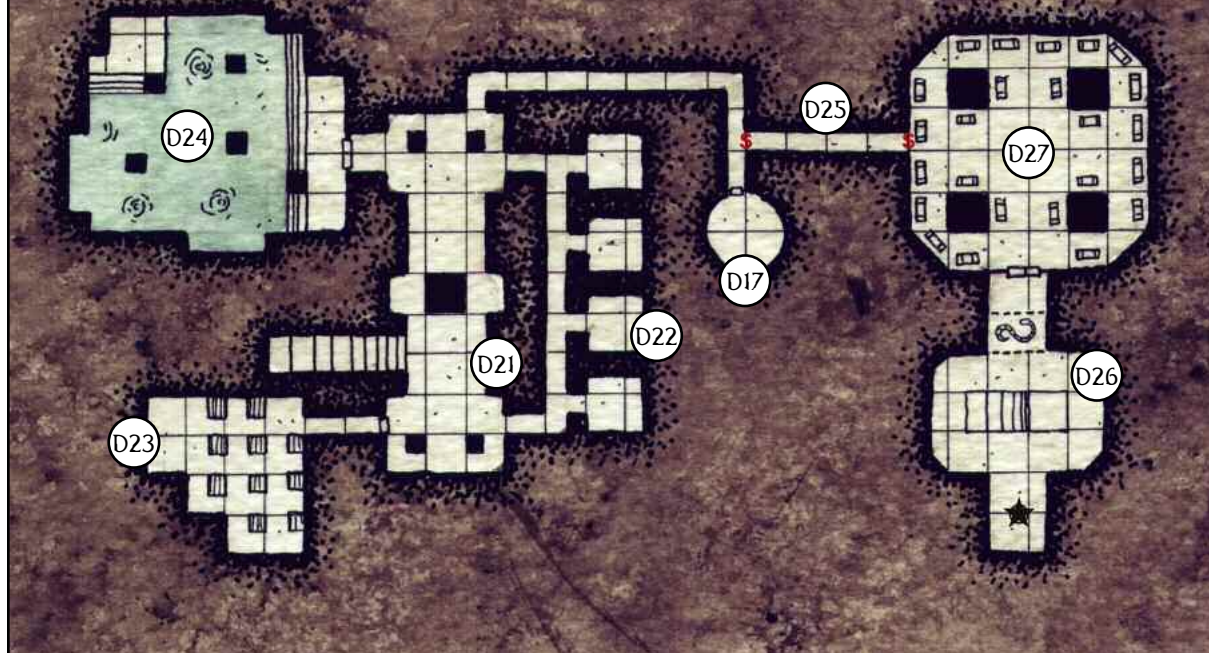
Possessions: +2 *longsword*, ring of protection +3, bracers of armor +4, cloak of resistance +2.

➤ **High Conflagration Jendar Tholm (Human Form):** As above, except Jendar cannot use his claw or bite abilities in human shape, relying instead on his longsword.

Jendar is willing to negotiate with characters. If he knows that the PCs confronting him have wreaked havoc with other Acolytes, Jendar may either offer to disband his cult and leave the Dungeon of the Ruins (intending to return in a few months and resume his efforts), or bribe the heroes to leave. The slaad is willing to give the characters all the treasure he possesses in return for their promise to leave the Acolytes alone. He figures that freeing Bazim-Gorag will offer plenty of opportunities to amass more wealth, so he considers his current valuables expendable. He does, however, attempt to use his Sense Motive skill to see whether the PCs are sincere in their promise to stay out of the Acolytes' business.

The Cistern and Crypt

1 square = 10 feet



If the heroes attack immediately, or if Jendar believes that he and Hoorg can defeat them easily, the slaad lord does not negotiate. He also attacks if he decides that the negotiations have no real chance of deflecting the heroes from the Dungeon of the Ruins.

Tactics: Jendar habitually remains in his human form, even though doing so deprives him of his natural attacks. Instead, he uses his spell-like abilities with abandon, especially *finger of death*, *implosion*, and *chaos hammer*. In combat, he has his *see invisibility* and *fly* spell-like abilities active at all times. Unless the situation is clearly advantageous, he avoids using *fireball* if Hoorg would be caught in the area. He knows the troll has a *ring of minor fire resistance*, but he doesn't want to chance dealing his bodyguard real damage. If desired, Jendar can use his Hide skill and his *invisibility* ability to conceal himself among the columns in the room. He must use a standard action to resume his slaad form, but he does so if it becomes apparent that he will be forced into melee.

Hoorg flies into a rage and wades into battle as soon as his master gives the signal, going out of his way to maul a spellcaster if he can.

Treasure: Jendar finds it useful to reward his Acolytes occasionally with gold and jewels, and he keeps the means for doing so at hand. Three large clay urns beside Jendar's table hold a total of 8,300 gp and 195 pp. The slaad keeps a pouch of gemstones hidden behind a loose stone in the column closest to his desk (Search DC 20). The collection includes two red orls (1,400 and 1,100 gp); a golden topaz (700 gp); an alexandrite (430 gp);

and six smaller tourmalines (100 gp each). On the desk lies a heavy golden seal, an old Selskaryn artifact worth 1,500 gp.

D25. SECRET WAY

This short passageway links the Crypt of Stars and the Well of Stars. The Selskaryn wizards generally accessed the crypt through the secret door in the dais of the Close of Stars, but Ilviroon's predecessors created this secret passage as an escape route.

The secret doors near area D17 and in area D27 are well hidden (Search DC 35) and long disused. They are not hidden on the inside, so anyone who discovers the secret way can easily see where it goes.

D26. PROCESSIONAL HALL (EL 14)

This chamber leads to the Crypt of Stars, where the Selskaryn interred those mages worthy of the honor.

The secret door in the dais of the Close of Stars leads to a broad stairway that descends into a dark, still chamber. A door of bronze stands in an alcove to the east, and a large statue of a grim-looking wizard in ancient dress occupies an alcove to the west.

Beneath the flagstone floor, the room is filled with sand to a depth of 15 feet. The pedestal of the staircase descends all the way to the true floor.

The statue has no remarkable features, although it is potentially valuable (see **Treasure**).

Trap: The door leading to area **D27** is protected by a *symbol of insanity* that goes off when someone other than a Selskaryn mage touches the door.

↖ **Symbol of Insanity Trap:** CR 9; spell; spell trigger; no reset; spell effect (*symbol of insanity*; 15th-level wizard; Will DC 22 negates); Search DC 33, Disable Device DC 33.

The statue depicts Dethil Marskoon, the Netherese mage who founded the Selskar order many hundreds of years ago.

D27. CRYPT OF THE MAGI (EL 15)

In this hidden chamber, the Selskar mages interred those of their order who had achieved the rank of magus or ar-magus before death claimed them. The crypt is protected by four Selskar watchghosts and an unusual trap to discourage tomb-robbers.

The redolence of old funerary spices hangs in the air of this chamber. Stone sepulchers line the walls, resting between low, thick columns. The chamber is finished in smooth, dark stone, and the sepulchers are made of rose-colored granite. Each is covered by a copper sheet inscribed with ancient writing.

Twenty-four sepulchers line this chamber, each containing the remains of a high officer of the Selskaryn—a magus or ar-magus. Engraved script on the copper covering of each sarcophagus gives the name and accomplishments of its occupant. The writing is in Loross (High Netherese), rendered in the Draconic alphabet. Characters who take the time to read these histories learn that the wizards buried here ranged from the obscure to the notorious in life.

Ilviroon is interred in the southernmost sarcophagus along the eastern wall. The inscription on his copper sheet reads, “Ilviroon, Ar-Magus, Binder of Chaos and Master of the North Star.”

The sarcophagi are secured by ancient bronze fittings. Anyone wishing to open one of these ancient tombs must pry it open by brute strength.

❖ **Sarcophagus:** 1 ft. thick; Hardness 12; 30 hp; break DC 26.

Trap: The Selskaryn built an unusual trap into the crypt. The entire floor is a one-way keyed *portal* that activates whenever someone who is not carrying a particular token (a small white stone in the shape of a star, marked with a rune) opens any sarcophagus. If triggered, the *portal* transports any creature touching the floor to a barren mountainside in Malbolge, sixth of the Nine Hells.

↖ **Portal Trap:** CR 8; magic device; location trigger; automatic reset; spell effect (*planeshift*, 17th-level wizard); Search DC 32; Disable Device DC 32.

Creatures: The heroes might expect to face hordes of undead here, but most of the Selskaryn mages rest peacefully enough. Lurking within each of the four pillars, however, is a Selskar watchghost, still observing its ancient duty to guard the crypt against desecration. The ghosts emerge and attack any creatures who attempt to open or deface any of the tombs.

➤ **Selskar Watchghosts:** hp 52 each; see area **D5**.

Development: The ghost of Nemehl cannot rest in peace until his remains (currently in area **D18**) are buried alongside

those of other ranking mages of his ancient order. The characters must ensure his eternal rest by burying him here in order to receive full XP for their encounter with him (see area **D18**).

The Crypt of Stars is an excellent place to plant adventure seeds for future adventures, such as maps, mysterious items, or ancient curses.

Treasure: The Selskaryn were not in the habit of burying their high mages with tremendous amounts of funerary wealth or hidden caches of magic items. Minor jewelry worth (1d6–1) × 100 gp can be stripped from the remains in any given sarcophagus. But a few of the stone coffins also contain more interesting treasure, as follows.

- Ilviroon's crypt contains a ring of jet (240 gp), a ring carved from a single emerald (4,400 gp), and a *rod of thunder and lightning*.
- The crypt of Hathalstar contains a silver skullcap that functions as an *amulet of proof against detection and location*, except that it must be worn on the head.
- On top of the remains in the crypt of Wulth is a sheet of parchment on which a *symbol of death* has been inscribed (Fort DC 24). The symbol affects anyone who opens the coffin and looks inside.
- The crypt of Malissta contains a diamond necklace (5,200 gp), a *ring of protection* +3, and a *wand of lightning bolt* (caster level 8th; 9 charges).

PART IV: PRISON OF THE FIREBRINGER

At the bottom of the Well of Stars lies the lowest level of the Dungeon of the Ruins, where Bazim-Gorag is interred. The dwarves of old made use of the fire rift on this level in their metalcraft, but the Selskaryn adapted the area to serve as the Firebringer's prison when they bound the slaad lord beneath their tower.

D28. VAULT OF STARS

The Well of Stars ends in the ceiling of this chamber. Read or paraphrase the following aloud if the characters arrive via the well:

At the bottom of the mote-flecked shaft lies a round chamber (bell-shaped in cross-section) about 50 feet in diameter and almost as tall. Wayward motes of light from the shaft drift through the air of the room. Double doors of bronze provide egress to the east and the west.

Although the motes from the well (area **D17**) stray into the upper reaches of this room, they pose no danger here.

The characters may have determined that the best way to traverse the Well of Stars is to descend as quickly as possible, which is easy enough. But climbing back out of the well takes much longer—even a character using a *fly* spell can ascend at only 60 feet per round because flying characters move at half speed while climbing. A character taking off from the floor of this room must spend at least 4 rounds ascending the well. Characters who have not yet discovered how to negate the dan-

gers of the positive energy motes in the shaft (see area **D17**) face increased exposure to this hazard because of the extra time it takes them to ascend the shaft.

D29. CHAMBER OF BINDING

This chamber is where the Selskaryn wizards bound Bazim-Gorag to his hedged prison. The double door leading into the room is made of bronze, but it is in good repair. (The Acolytes have visited this chamber on numerous occasions over the last few months and have put some effort into upkeep.)

Read or paraphrase the following when the characters enter:

The pale green stone floor of this room is decorated with a dark metal inlay. The design consists of a circle intersected by three half-circles, the arms of which are in turn intersected by smaller half-circles. In the north wall is a blank archway of stone inscribed with strange-looking runes. The entire room is finished in the same pale emerald stone as the floor, mottled with pink and white in spots.

The inlay is made from cold iron hammered into grooves cut in the floor. A successful DC 30 Knowledge (arcana) check identifies the design as a diagram useful against creatures of chaos.

The blank stone archway to the north serves no other purpose than to convey a bound outsider from this room into area **D35**. It functions only when a *binding* spell is cast in this room, or when the rite of unbinding is performed. The archway is only a conduit; it is not magical in and of itself.

D30. THE BEAST OF NINE FLAMES

After his summoning and before his falling out with the Selskaryn, Bazim-Gorag demanded that suitable chambers be set aside for him. The Selskaryn obliged by modifying this room and the two halls to the north. This chamber, which now contains a great moat of lava, is currently home to Bazim-Gorag's battle-mount, the Beast of Nine Flames.

The double door leading into this room is made of bronze. It is in good repair and unlocked, although it is hot to the touch.

Beyond the double bronze doors lies an immense natural cavern filled with bubbling lava and illuminated only by its angry red glare. The air in here is as hot as a blazing forge, and the sizzling and bubbling of lava is noisy enough to make speech difficult. The room is about 50 feet wide (east to west) and perhaps three times as long (north to south).

Islands of solid, flat-topped stone rise from the bubbling lava here and there, forming a difficult path to the north and another to the south. In the southern portion of the room, the stepping-stones curve out of sight, but in the northern section, they lead to a ledge and a broken door. In front of the door lies a hulking, red-scaled monstrosity with nine serpentine heads. Its necks writhe and coil, and its mouths hiss in constant agitation.

The cavern ceiling is about 30 feet above the surface of the lava. The pool is 10 feet deep next to the islands, but the bottom quickly drops to a depth of 30 feet in the middle of the cavern.

The air in this cavern is extremely hot (see Heat Dangers on page 303 of the *DUNGEON MASTER'S Guide*), and it deals 1d6 points of fire damage per minute (no save) to every creature in the room. A character wearing metal armor is affected as if by a *heat metal* spell and takes 1d4 points of additional fire damage per round (no save).

A creature in a square adjacent to one of the islands is considered to be in contact with the lava, but not immersed unless it falls prone or remains there for more than 1 round. The lava is much thicker than water, so a Medium creature walking through the pool sinks about half its height into the lava each round. Anyone trying to swim in the lava takes a –8 penalty on the Swim check. The lava deals 2d6 points of fire damage per round of contact, or 20d6 points per round of immersion.

The island surfaces are 5 feet above the lava. Leaping from island to island is not particularly difficult: Crossing a 5-foot gap requires a successful DC 5 Jump check (long jump); crossing a 10-foot gap requires a successful DC 10 Jump check (long jump). A character who fails the check slips into the lava adjacent to the target island, taking damage for exposure rather than immersion. The Acolytes usually fly across the cavern.

Creature: This cavern is home to the Beast of Nine Flames, a fiendish 9-headed pyrohydra with the monster of legend template (see *Monster Manual II*). The Beast has served as Bazim-Gorag's mount in battle for centuries. Although it was not included in the *binding* spell that trapped the slaad lord here, it remains nearby, waiting for its master to regain his freedom.

The Beast of Nine Flames is intelligent enough to recognize the Acolytes and their slaadi companions as friends, but it attacks any other creatures that enter the cavern.

➤ **Beast of Nine Flames, Male Fiendish 9-headed Pyrohydra of Legend:** CR 14; Huge Outsider (fire, native); HD 9d8+90; hp 144; Init +8; Spd 20 ft., swim 20 ft.; AC 27, touch 12, flat-footed 23; Base Atk +9; Grp +27; Atk +18 melee (2d6+10, bite); Full Atk +18 melee (2d6+10, 9 bites); Space/Reach 15 ft./10 ft.; SA breath weapon (20-ft. flame jet), poison, smite good (+9 damage) 1/day; SQ cold resistance 10, darkvision 60 ft., DR 10/magic, fast healing 19, fire subtype, immunities (mind-affecting effects, polymorphing), low-light vision, outsider traits, see in darkness, scent; SR 14; AL CE; SV Fort +19, Ref +13, Will +9; Str 31, Dex 18, Con 30, Int 5, Wis 12, Cha 13.

Skills: Listen +9, Spot +9, Swim +18. **Feats:** Alertness, Combat Reflexes, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Multiattack, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (bite).

Breath Weapon (Su): Once every 1d4 rounds, the Beast of Nine Flames can breathe a 20-foot flame jet with each head. Every creature in the area takes 3d6 points of fire damage (Reflex DC 24 half).

Poison (Ex): The Beast of Nine Flames delivers its poison (Fort DC 24) with each successful bite attack. The poison deals 1d6 points of initial and secondary Strength damage.

See in Darkness (Su): The Beast of Nine Flames can see perfectly in darkness of any kind, even that created by *deeper darkness* spells.

Tactics: The Beast of Nine Flames can swim in the lava, since it has a swim speed of 20 feet and is immune to fire damage. It cannot breathe under the lava, so it does not immerse itself for more than a few rounds at a time. The creature can squeeze past islands with a 10-foot gap between them, but it can't get through a gap of only 5 feet.

The creature takes to the lava if attacked by spells or ranged weapons from a distance at which it cannot counterattack. While under the lava, the monster gains total cover against attacks from above, but it cannot launch any attacks of its own. If it wishes, the Beast of Nine Flames can choose to fight with only its heads above the lava, in which case it gains cover (+4 bonus to AC, +2 Reflex saves). It can clamber on top of the lava only when it is within 5 feet of an island, and it can remain there for only 1 round before its weight causes it to become partially submerged again.

Since a hydra can make a full attack even if it moves, the Beast of Nine Flames often submerges and swims toward the island or ledge where it last saw its attackers, then surges up out of the lava to attack. If no one is there, the monster uses its second move to retreat back under the lava. It deals with flying characters who remain out of its reach by making good use of its breath weapon. If the monster is completely on top of the lava (no cover), its breath weapon can reach targets all the way to the cavern ceiling.

If reduced to 30 hp or less, the Beast of Nine Flames breaks off combat and retreats to the bottom of the lava pool to hide and heal. It can hold its breath for 60 rounds (6 minutes) at a time.

D31. DECEPTIVE DOOR

The Selskaryn arranged a devious trap here to ensnare anyone seeking to release their most important prisoner. Read or paraphrase the following aloud when the characters enter.

To the south, the island stepping-stones lead to another worked stone ledge. A massive double door made of bronze is set into the wall there.

The last stepping-stone before the ledge is actually a *permanent image* (Will DC 22 disbelief). Only a character who somehow examines or probes the stepping-stone (tossing a coin onto it, for example) receives a saving throw to disbelieve the effect. A character who examines the illusory stepping-stone by jumping onto it receives no saving throw and falls into the lava, taking damage as if completely immersed.

Development: Once the characters reach the double door, a successful DC 10 Search check identifies it as a false door.

D32. THE BROKEN SEAL

This door once barred access to Bazim-Gorag's prison. Read or paraphrase the following aloud when the PCs reach this area.

Apparently, a massive stone door once stood at the north end of the lava cavern, blocking a passage of worked stone. But judging from the huge chunks of rune-scribed rubble that litter the floor here, someone must have destroyed it long ago.

The passageway beyond the door is made of dressed stone covered in plaster, which is painted with scenes of fire and destruction, including erupting volcanoes and burning cities. One particularly awful set of frescoes depicts an unusual form of human sacrifice, in which the victim is chained inside a stone mold, which is then filled with molten lava.

The Company of the Riven Orb broke through this door seventeen years ago during its explorations of the Dungeon of the Ruins. The members of this adventuring band retreated from Bazim-Gorag but did not reseal the door. This omission led to Bazim-Gorag's gradual accumulation of followers and the formation of a cult in his service.

Development: This chamber is a potential endpoint for the adventure, depending on how the mission has been presented to the players. If the heroes seal this passage thoroughly, Bazim-Gorag (and the *scepter of the ar-magus* needed to free him) will be locked away, out of contact with the Acolytes. Of course, sooner or later the slaad lord's allies will reopen the way to Bazim-Gorag's prison, but that might not happen for centuries . . . or it might happen very quickly, depending on your campaign.

D33. HALL OF WAITING (EL 21)

This room and area **D35** to the west constitute Bazim-Gorag's hedged prison. The slaad lord cannot leave these rooms, nor can any of his powers or abilities affect creatures outside of these chambers.

The entrance to the Firebringer's prison is marked by an archway of red stones, scribed with lawful runes. This entryway constitutes no barrier to anyone except Bazim-Gorag, who cannot pass through it by any means.

The passage ends in a strange, 10-foot-tall arch of red stones, each scribed with runes in geometric shapes. Beyond the archway lies a magnificent hall, with walls made of rough red granite and floors finished in polished red marble veined with gold. Four gleaming pillars of the same red marble support a vaulted ceiling 40 feet high.

In the center of the room, a square pool of lava seethes sluggishly, illuminating the room with red light. A heap of blackened bones and slag-fouled chains lies near the pool of lava.

At the far end of the room, opposite the archway, stands a smooth black mirror worked in the shape of another doorway.

The Acolytes who come to attend Bazim-Gorag are granted audiences in this room. They often bring captives to be sacrificed for the evil slaad's amusement, and these unfortunates meet their end in the lava pool at the room's center.

The surface of the lava pool is 5 feet below the level of the floor, and the lava is about 15 feet deep (refer to Lava on page

304 of the *DUNGEON MASTER's Guide* for details). The lava supply in the pool is refreshed once per day by a *portal* in the bottom that leads to the Elemental Plane of Fire.

Creatures: If the PCs have thus far managed to hide their presence in the complex, Bazim-Gorag remains in area **D35** and does not appear here. If the slaad lord has been warned of the PCs' presence in the complex, either by the Acolytes or by his own spell-like abilities, he has been awaiting their arrival here with some eagerness. In this case, he steps into this room through the *portal* from area **D35** a few rounds after the PCs enter. The slaad lord is cruel, bloodthirsty, and only too happy to destroy adventurers who wander into his grasp, but not until he is certain that they can be of no use in gaining his freedom. Thus, unless he is immediately attacked, he initially chooses conversation over combat in this encounter.

Read or paraphrase the following if Bazim-Gorag enters:

The black mirror at the far end of the room suddenly seems to ripple strangely, and a tall human steps through. He carries a glaive wreathed in black flame, and his hair is a brilliant shock of red and orange. His skin is a dark, ruddy shade of bronze, and his red eyes almost seem to glow. "We've been waiting for you," he says in a voice that changes pitch in mid-sentence. "We have watched your progress. Consent to assist us in escaping from the bonds of ancient treachery, and we will reward you richly indeed."

Bazim-Gorag makes his best efforts to convince the PCs that they should free him while simultaneously determining whether they have the means to do so. His change of voice is the result of speech from his two heads, even though only one head is visible in his human form.

If the PCs refuse to aid him, Bazim-Gorag attempts to shake their certainty in the righteousness of their path by presenting his side of the story. As he tells it, he was unjustly imprisoned by the ancient wizards of Selskar because they refused to live up to the bargain they'd made with him. (This portion of his story is true.) Therefore, freeing him would simply right an ancient wrong. If this argument fails to move the PCs, Bazim-Gorag attacks (see **Tactics**, below).

Bazim-Gorag interprets hemming and hawing on the part of the characters as a sign that they don't want to do what he asks but aren't forthright enough to tell him so. While he is no great admirer of honesty, the slaad lord figures that a party acting in this manner is more likely to betray him than aid him. He makes one more attempt to determine the party's position, and if that fails, he attacks (see **Tactics**, below).

If the party agrees to his request, allow Bazim-Gorag a Sense Motive check to determine whether the PCs actually intend to free him or are just stringing him along. If he has reason to be suspicious, he insists on placing a *geas* upon the party's leader that would force that character to carry out the group's promise and free him. If the *geas* is accepted, or Bazim-Gorag's Sense Motive check revealed nothing amiss, he then explains how the

rite of unbinding must be performed. He also surrenders the *scepter of the ar-magus* to the characters if they have the requisite spellcasters along. Bazim-Gorag refuses to give up the scepter to a party that does not yet include the individuals necessary to complete the rite; he simply tells the PCs to return with the three required willing wizards.

If the characters wish to negotiate a price for their aid, Bazim-Gorag is willing to offer them all the treasure in area **D35**. He's even willing to show them exactly what they'll get by escorting them into the next room. (The slaad lord figures that he can decide later whether or not to give his rescuers the agreed-upon price, but he values his accumulated wealth much less than his possible freedom.)

➤ **Bazim-Gorag the Firebringer, Male Slaad Lord:** CR 21; Large Outsider (chaotic, evil, extraplanar); HD 25d8+225; hp 339; Init +7; Spd 30 ft.; AC 34, touch 17, flat-footed 31; Base Atk +25; Grp +40; Atk +40 melee (2d8+20/plus 1d6 fire plus 2d6 unholy/19–20/x3 plus 2d10 fire plus 2d6 unholy, Large +4 *flaming burst unholy glaive*); Full Atk +40/+35/+30/+25 melee (2d8+20/plus 1d6 fire plus 2d6 unholy/19–20/x3 plus 2d10 fire plus 2d6 unholy, Large +4 *flaming burst unholy glaive*) and +30 melee (2d10+5, 2 bites), or +35 melee (3d8+11, 2 claws) and +30 melee (2d10+5, 2 bites); Space/Reach 10 ft./10 ft. (15 ft. with glaive); SA incandescent aura, incinerating strike 3/day, spell-like abilities; SQ all-around vision, change shape, darkvision 60 ft., double mind, damage reduction 30/+4, fast healing 10, immunities, outsider traits, pernicious fire, resistances, *summon slaad*, telepathy 100 ft.; SR 30; AL CE; SV Fort +25, Ref +17, Will +18; Str 32, Dex 17, Con 28, Int 19, Wis 18, Cha 24.

Skills: Balance +23, Bluff +27, Concentration +29, Diplomacy +33, Disguise +19 (+21 to act in character), Gather Information +27, Hide +24, Intimidate +9, Knowledge (arcana) +24, Knowledge (religion) +24, Knowledge (the planes) +24, Listen +29, Move Silently +23, Search +26, Sense Motive +29, Spellcraft +26, Spot +29. **Feats:** Cleave, Great Cleave, Great Fortitude, Improved Critical (glaive), Improved Initiative, Improved Sunder, Leadership, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (glaive).

Change Shape (Su): Bazim-Gorag can assume any humanoid form as a standard action. In humanoid form, Bazim-Gorag cannot use his natural weapons, relying instead on his spell-like abilities. He remains in one form until he chooses to assume a new one. A change in form cannot be *dispelled*, but the slaad reverts to his natural form when killed. A *true seeing* spell reveals his natural form. When Bazim-Gorag assumes another shape, his glaive automatically readjusts in size to suit the new shape. Its base damage adjusts to the new size, but its other enhancements remain in place.

Immunities (Ex): Immune to fire, petrification, and poison.

Incandescent Aura (Su): Bazim-Gorag can wreath his body in a flaming aura as a free action. Anyone within 20 feet of the slaad lord takes 6d6 points of fire damage per round and must make a successful DC 31 Reflex save or catch fire (see *Catching on Fire* in the *DUNGEON MASTER's Guide*).

Incinerating Strike (Su): Three times per day, Bazim-Gorag can declare an incinerating strike with a melee attack. If the attack hits, he deals 100 points of fire damage (Fort save DC 29 half) in addition to his normal melee damage. Any creature slain by this attack is utterly consumed in fire, as if subjected to a *destruction* spell.

Spell-Like Abilities: At will—*animate objects*, *chaos hammer*, *cloak of chaos*, *deeper darkness*, *detect good*, *detect law*, *detect magic*, *detect thoughts*, *fear*, *fire storm*, *greater dispel magic*, *invisibility*, *shatter*, *telekinesis*, *greater teleport*, *wall of fire*, *word of chaos*; 3/day—*dispel law*, *divination*, *hold monster*, *meteor swarm*, *power word stun*, *true seeing*; 1/day—*geas/quest*, *power word kill*, *vision*, *weird*. Caster level 20th; save DC 17 + spell level.

All-Around Vision (Ex): Bazim-Gorag gains a +4 racial bonus to Search and Spot checks (already included in the statistics above), and he cannot be flanked.

Alternate Form (Su): Bazim-Gorag can shift between his natural form and any humanoid form at will as a standard action. The ability is otherwise similar to *polymorph* (caster level 15th).

Double Mind (Ex): Bazim-Gorag has two brains and two personas. One brain can direct his body while the other engages in a completely unrelated activity, such as conversation or the use of his spell-like abilities. In combat, Bazim-Gorag gains a bonus standard action each turn, which can be used only to perform a mental activity, such as using a spell-like ability or a skill based on a mental ability score. He cannot use the same spell-like ability twice in the same round.

Bazim-Gorag is treated as two independent creatures for the purpose of targeting him with a mind-affecting effect. A spell that affects only one target can affect one of Bazim-Gorag's minds, but not both. If one of Bazim-Gorag's minds is incapacitated or affected in some way, Bazim-Gorag loses his bonus action. If he is subjected to a mind-affecting effect that can affect two or more creatures at once, each of his two minds saves separately and is affected separately.

As long as one of Bazim-Gorag's minds remains unaffected by a particular effect, the affected mind gains a new saving throw each round to shake off the effect. If both minds are affected by the same effect, Bazim-Gorag is affected normally.

Pernicious Fire (Su): Bazim-Gorag's spell-like abilities that have the fire descriptor function as though empowered, dealing 50% more damage than would normally be indicated.

Resistances (Ex): Bazim-Gorag has acid, cold, electricity, and sonic resistance 10.

Summon Slaad (Sp): This ability is currently unavailable to Bazim-Gorag in his *binding*. If freed, he can automatically summon one gray slaad or 1d4+1 blue slaadi once per day.

Telepathy (Su): Bazim-Gorag can communicate telepathically with any creature within 100 feet that has a language.

Possessions: Large +4 flaming burst unholy glaive, ring of protection +5.

➤ **Bazim-Gorag the Firebringer (Human Form), Male Slaad Lord:** As above, except AC 35, touch 19, flat-footed 32; Atk +41 melee (1d10+20/plus 1d6 fire plus 2d6 unholy/19–20/×3 plus 2d10 fire plus 2d6 unholy, Large +4 flaming burst unholy glaive); Full Atk +41/+36/+31/+26 melee (1d10+20/plus 1d6 fire plus 2d6 unholy/19–20/×3 plus 2d10 fire plus 2d6 unholy, Large +4 flaming burst unholy glaive); Space/Reach 5 ft./5 ft. (10 ft. with glaive); Hide +28.

Tactics: In his human form, Bazim-Gorag has access to his devastating spell-like abilities and his glaive shifts to accommodate his new size, but he can't deal nearly as much melee damage as he can in his natural form. His special abilities function normally despite his humanoid shape, though. (Refer to the statistics block provided for Bazim-Gorag in human form for details on the changes.)

His double mind ability means that Bazim-Gorag can use a spell-like ability each round in addition to any other normal action he could take (almost always a physical attack). If his enemies seem well protected against fire attacks, Bazim-Gorag makes liberal use of his *greater dispel magic* ability to remove their protections.

If the PCs seem weak, Bazim-Gorag does not bother to change form or expend his limited-usage spell-like abilities. Instead, he simply employs his *fear*, *fire storm*, and *telekinesis* spell-like abilities while wading into battle with his glaive. He might also use *telekinesis* to dump a PC in the lava pit if the opportunity presents itself.

If the PCs appear to constitute a challenge, Bazim-Gorag buys himself a round by using either *wall of fire* or *deeper darkness* to keep his enemies out of reach while he resumes his normal form. Once back in his slaad shape, the Firebringer wades into battle, scouring the PCs with *fire storms* and *meteor swarms*, and pounding them with melee attacks.

If the PCs seem truly dangerous, Bazim-Gorag retreats to area D35 through the *portal*. During any respite gained through his retreat, he changes to his normal form and readies himself for a serious battle by invoking his *cloak of chaos* and *true seeing* abilities.

SCEPTER OF THE AR-MAGUS

This golden scepter functions as a +1 *light mace*. While wielded or carried in hand, it also functions as a *brooch of shielding*, negating *magic missile* attacks against its wielder. It can absorb up to 20 points of damage from *magic missile* attacks per day. In addition, three times per day it can produce an effect identical to that of a *minor globe of invulnerability*. Finally, twice per day, the scepter can fire a *prismatic ray* (range 100 feet) that hits with a successful ranged touch attack by the wielder. If the ray strikes the target, the effect functions as one randomly determined ray of the *prismatic*

spray spell. The target is entitled to the normal saving throw allowed for that particular ray. The wielder does not know which ray will be produced until it appears.

The *scepter of the ar-magus* is required to complete the rite of unbinding. However, any magic item with the same powers would suffice for the purpose of the rite, so if the original scepter is destroyed, another could be made for the rite.

Strong varied; CL: 13th; Craft Rod, *minor globe of invulnerability*, *prismatic spray*, *shield*; Price: 63,000 gp; Weight: 5 lbs.

D34. THE PORTAL

Between the two rooms of Bazim-Gorag's prison stands a powerful portal that allows Bazim-Gorag (and others) passage to the other portion of his prison (area **D35**). The *portal* appears as a mirror of black glass. Bazim-Gorag has the ability to make the portal impermeable to entry at will for up to 5 rounds (30 seconds), once per minute. The Selskaryn wizards imposed this limit to ensure that the slaad lord would never remain permanently out of their reach.

Standing in the center of an archway is a 10-foot tall mirror made of what appears to be gleaming black glass. Its silver frame appears to be affixed to the stone walls around it, so that the mirror blocks the passageway completely. Strangely asymmetrical runes along its perimeter seem to change shape every time you look at them.

The *mirror* has been placed here in such a fashion that anyone moving from area **D33** to area **D35** must pass through it. The mirror faces east, toward area **D33**. Bazim-Gorag leaves the mirror permeable unless he expects a potentially lethal attack.

D35. THE HEDGED GAOL

This double hall is the other half of Bazim-Gorag's prison.

On the far side of the black mirror is an immense hall built of red granite and polished red marble. Two wide archways opposite the doorway lead to a similar, parallel hall appointed in the same way. Fuming lava boils and hisses in a square moat ringing the archways that lead to the other side of the hall. Smaller pools of lava seethe along the east and west walls. The whole room reeks with the smell of molten rock, and the ruddy glare of the magma gives the room a hellish glow.

At the south end of the western hall, a blank stone portal occupies one wall. Gold gleams in great heaps near this entryway.

The surfaces of the lava pools are 5 feet below the level of the floor, and the lava is about 15 feet deep in each. The lava supply in each pool is refreshed once per day by a *portal* in the bottom that leads to the Elemental Plane of Fire. Bazim-Gorag's hoard is visible in the western half of the room, near the blank stone portal there.

Creatures: If the characters somehow avoided meeting Bazim-Gorag in area **D33**, the slaad lord is here in his natural form. Continue with the following, adjusting as needed to suit the situation:

Pacing absently along the edge of the lava moat is a lean, frog-like being about the size of an ogre, with mottled skin of red and gold. It has two heads that hiss and mutter to each other, and it carries a massive glaive of dark iron with black flames dancing along its shaft. Its four eyes look like balls of white flame.

Upon noticing you, it stops, leans on its glaive, and looks at you. "Guests," one head says. "We've been expecting you."

The other head nods in agreement. "We have been treacherously bound here for a long time. If you aid us, we will reward you with riches beyond your wildest imaginings."

As noted in the description of area **D33**, Bazim-Gorag would prefer to persuade the characters to set him free, but he is no fool. Any hostile actions from the PCs provoke an immediate and deadly response.

Tactics: If sorely pressed in this room, Bazim-Gorag holds nothing back, using his most deadly abilities with abandon. He knows he has nowhere to run, so he lays into his attackers with his incinerating strike and his most powerful spell-like abilities, such as *power word kill*, *weird*, and *meteor swarm*. The slaad lord is clever enough to play for time by using his spell-like abilities to wall off the battlefield if necessary, relying on his fast healing to bring him back to strength while his opponents' best enhancement effects wear off.

If Bazim-Gorag becomes embroiled in a fight for his life, he becomes a dynamo of destruction. By this point, the characters have had ample warning that they're facing a very tough monster. They shouldn't be able to defeat the slaad lord unless they arm themselves with their best spells and make the best preparations they possibly can before stepping into his prison. If they fail to take advantage of the time they have to prepare, let Bazim-Gorag mop the floor with them.

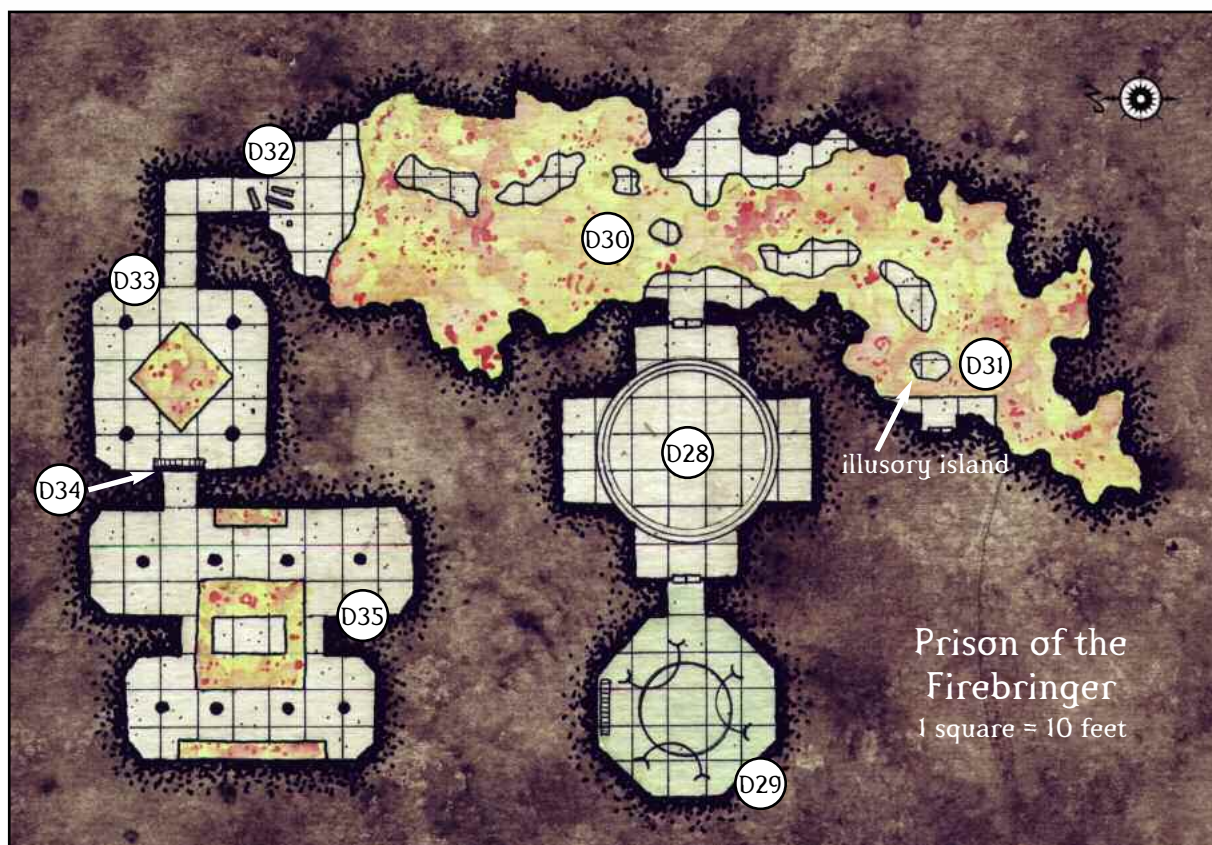
Treasure: Bazim-Gorag was given a small hoard of treasure by the Selskaryn hundreds of years ago, as a down payment on his services. Since then, he has also collected the arms and equipment of more than one adventuring party that blundered into his lair, and his Acolytes have lavished many small gifts upon him. The slaad lord has sent much of this wealth back out into Faerûn through his agents, but a great deal still remains here. He deliberately displays the wealth in splendid abandon to impress potential recruits with the riches he could provide.

Four large wooden chests, rotten with age, burst at the seams with coinage—a total of 25,500 sp, 17,440 gp, and 680 pp (26,790 gp worth of coins). These coins are a mix of the currency of ancient Netheril as well as modern Waterdeep and Silverymoon.

Strewn haphazardly across the piles of coinage are a number of gemstones, including a marvelous emerald (6,600 gp), a marquise-cut pink diamond (3,700 gp), three fire opals (1,200 gp each), a black star sapphire (1,100 gp), two star rubies (800 gp each), a blue spinel (600 gp), a king's tear (500 gp), a violet garnet (400 gp), seven lesser stones (100 gp each), fourteen precious stones (50 gp each), and thirty semiprecious stones (10 gp each). The total value of the gemstones is 19,800 gp.

In a small wooden case lying atop the coins is a silver fillet set with diamonds (2,900 gp) and a pair of diamond earrings (400 gp each). A small lyre made of dragonbone inlaid with mithral (a masterwork instrument worth 4,200 gp) lies to one side, and a jeweled scabbard (empty; 600 gp) is buried beneath the coins.

Bazim-Gorag's treasure hoard also includes the following miscellaneous magic gear: a +1 rapier, a +1 flaming falchion, a +3 dagger, a +1 heavy steel shield, a +2 mithral breastplate, +1 full plate, a cloak of arachnida, a cloak of resistance +1, a figurine of wondrous power (golden lion), and a wand of lightning bolt (caster level 6th, 35 charges). Most of these items were taken from relatively low-level adventurers who were simply no match for the slaad lord.



Prison of the
Firebringer
1 square = 10 feet

Finally, resting atop the treasure pile is the *scepter of the ar-magus*. This device (described in the sidebar) is required for the rite of unbinding.

Note: This hoard is intended to constitute a good CR-21 treasure. Among other things, it rewards a PC group that either defeats Bazim-Gorag outright or completely hoodwinks the slaad lord (both very difficult tasks).

CONCLUSION

There are four good ways to end this adventure: scatter the Acolytes, wall off the prison, steal the scepter, or defeat Bazim-Gorag. Each of these options is examined in detail below.

SCATTER THE ACOLYTES

Defeating Moskogg, Durzhul, and Jendar Tholm sets the Acolytes back by several years. Without the knowledge and the leadership of these important cultists, the only creature who knows the rite of unbinding is Bazim-Gorag himself. Checking the slaad lord's bid for freedom is not as good as defeating him outright, but it certainly defers the threat he poses for a long time. For this victory, award the PCs experience points equal to 25% of what they would have earned for defeating Bazim-Gorag directly.

Any of the three principal Acolyte leaders who remain alive begin to rebuild the Acolytes of the Hidden Flame a few months after the heroes leave Selskar Vale. They manage to free Bazim-Gorag within a year if not stopped.

WALL OFF THE PRISON

Another good delaying tactic is to seal up either the Well of Stars or the passageway leading to Bazim-Gorag's lair. There are numerous ways to seal off the Firebringer's prison, by either magical or mundane means. If the PCs establish a serious and long-lasting barrier to seal in the slaad lord, award them experience points equal to 25% of what they would have earned for defeating him directly. The characters may earn this award in addition to the one above, for a total of 50% of the XP for defeating Bazim-Gorag.

Any of the Acolyte leaders who survive the PCs' onslaught return to dig out their master in a few months. Thus, this tactic delays Bazim-Gorag's freedom by no more than a year or two.

STEAL THE SCEPTER

Clever characters might convince Bazim-Gorag that they mean to free him, and thereby trick him into giving them the scepter. Alternatively, they might manage to slip into his gaol long enough to seize the scepter and then flee. Getting the *scepter of the ar-magus* away from Bazim-Gorag represents a major setback for the Acolytes—one that is likely to delay the Firebringer's release by many years. Award the PCs full experience for defeating Bazim-Gorag if they get their hands on the scepter and either destroy it or hide it so well that the Acolytes will never find it.

DEFEAT BAZIM-GORAG

This option should constitute a harrowing test for a party of 13th-level characters. If the PCs insist on dealing with the slaad lord in

this manner, make them earn their experience. Bazim-Gorag's imprisonment puts him at a distinct disadvantage, but he is still extremely dangerous. Obviously, defeating Bazim-Gorag outright puts a permanent end to the threat posed by the Firebringer and merits the full experience award.

WHAT IF BAZIM-GORAG IS FREED?

A neutral-aligned party with more greed than sense might be inclined to accept the Firebringer's bribe and release him. Unfortunately for them, Bazim-Gorag is a corrupt and evil slaad, and he is almost as bad as a demon prince in his own way. If the PCs decide to help the Firebringer escape, Bazim-Gorag gives them his hoard from area **D35**, but they gain no experience for defeating the slaad lord. Gaining a heap of treasure for such a reckless act is reward enough.

Once freed, Bazim-Gorag rampages throughout the North for several months, bringing untold suffering and woe to towns such as Nesmé, Yartar, Triboar, and the outlying villages of Silverymoon before disappearing back to Limbo. The PCs might later discover that they have earned the enmity of many powerful people and outsiders, including Bazim-Gorag's rivals among the lords of the slaadi, as well as several powerful personages in the North—particularly Alustriel, Taern Hornblade, and Khelben Blackstaff. Alustriel and Khelben are hardly likely to hunt the PCs down in person, but they would certainly task other adventurers with tracking down the lunatics who released a slaad lord into Faerûn. Such powerful NPCs could also use their far-reaching influence to cause trouble for the PCs for a long time down the road. Ω

Richard Baker has been a senior designer, developer, and creative director with TSR, Inc. and Wizards of the Coast, Inc. since 1991. Special thanks to Ed Stark, Warren Wyman, James Wyatt, David Noonan, and Tim Rhoades for the playtesting, and to Eric L. Boyd for the Realmslore check.

ISSUE #102 PREVIEWS

Zenith Trajectory

by David Noonan

The **Adventure Path** continues with its third installment. The PCs' actions in Cauldron have caught the attention of more powerful residents of the city, and they are invited to embark on a quest to bring back one of Cauldron's lost heroes. A perilous journey through the Underdark awaits, and at its end, a deadly puzzle sure to keep the PCs on their toes. Can they return the missing Cauldronite to his home? More importantly, can they survive to return themselves? A D&D **Adventure Path: Shattered City** adventure for 6th-level PCs.

Cry Wolf

by Nicolas Logue

An uncannily intelligent wolf has been terrorizing the residents of Rendrick, and a bounty has been placed on the creature. The PCs must discover the truth behind its odd motives and act quickly to ensure innocent lives aren't lost. A D&D adventure for 2nd-level PCs.

MOUNT ZOGON



BY TONY MOSELEY



THE CHASM BRIDGE

BY DESMOND R. VARADY

REVISED FOR 3RD EDITION BY CHRIS THOMASSON

ARTWORK BY ANDREW HOU, ARNOLD TSANG, AND TOM FOWLER •
CARTOGRAPHY BY CHRISTOPHER WEST

"The Chasm Bridge" is a D&D adventure for four 7th-level characters. It takes place in any part of an underground realm with natural caverns. The scenario can be dropped into a dungeon or used as part of an ongoing underground campaign. It should, however, be placed in an area that will be frequently traveled by the party (see "Conclusion"). The adventure can be scaled for larger or smaller groups, or for higher- or lower-level parties using the "Scaling the Adventure" sidebar.

BACKGROUND

Over a year ago, an evil wizard named Mistle and his adventuring companions arrived at the edge of a vast underground gorge. The party found that there was no way to cross the chasm at this point, so with the help of a few spells and a *staff of earth and stone*, Mistle created the stone bridge still present here. Once Mistle's party was across the chasm, an encounter with a particularly tough umber hulk crippled the wizard, biting off one of the caster's legs. The party's cleric did what she could, but regenerative spells were not available, and the party wanted to move on. There were many edible lichens and molds in the area, plus a good source of water, so Mistle decided to stay near the newly made bridge until his associates could come back with magical aid. The adventurers never returned.

After Mistle realized he might be staying in the area for a while, he decided to make his surroundings a bit more comfortable and built a series of secret caves in a rock formation near the bridge, using his spells and staff. Two balconies allowed him to look out over the bridge area to view passersby without being vulnerable, and also provided a defensible position for the crippled spellcaster.

In the past year or so, events have changed both the nature of the area and Mistle's own life. About two months after Mistle had settled into his new home, a group of ogres and duergar happened upon the area. Wounded from a recent battle, they collapsed here, thinking it a safe place to rest. Mistle sprung upon them, hoping to kill them quickly and quietly. But the leader of the ogres, Graak by name, managed to talk his way out

of certain death for both himself and his companions. Arrangements were made for the monsters to enter the employ of the evil wizard as bridge guards and toll collectors. All agreed that it would be a most beneficial and rewarding relationship, especially after the group collaborated to destroy the only other nearby crossing of this chasm.

Just two months ago, a group of enterprising svirfneblin opened a tunnel nearby. These gnomes also built a rope-and-wire bridge just a few hundred feet away from the toll crossing, in the same spot once occupied by the bridge that Mistle and his allies destroyed. The svirfneblin offered this free route to all the underground denizens who didn't want to pay the toll (this underground area is well traveled by many Underdark races).

The gnomes' good intentions were ruined, however, when a group of gargoyles, led by a particularly intelligent leader named Slissh-Ikil, moved into the area, seeing it as a good place to prey upon travelers. Slissh-Ikil had hoped to also take over the bridge controlled by Mistle, but after a fierce and devastating battle with the wizard and his companions, the gargoyle leader decided to be content with his single bridge. In a gesture of good faith, Slissh-Ikil offered Mistle the services of two svirfneblin gnomes he and his band of gargoyles had captured on their attack of the bridge. These two gnomes are still held in slavery by the wizard, cleaning his lab and quarters, and performing other menial tasks for Mistle and his guards.

As it stands now, Mistle and Slissh-Ikil have a shaky agreement of sorts. Those who refuse to pay the toll on Mistle's bridge are routinely offered the choice of traversing the gargoyles' "free" pathway. The recent addition of a derro named Haltik Wrath to the wizard's guards has increased intrigue and suspicion among the denizens of the chasm area. This chaotic creature is closely watched by both Mistle and his henchman Graak.

The challenge for PCs is simply to cross the chasm, a relatively straightforward task were it not for the presence of the various denizens and guardians of the area.

ADVENTURE SYNOPSIS

The PCs approach Mistle's toll bridge and encounter his ogre mercenaries, demanding a hefty fee to cross unmolested. If the PCs decide to pay the exorbitant sum outright, the ogres figure they have great deals of treasure and decide to ambush them, drawing Mistle's attention from his personal quarters. Once the ogres have been dealt with, they must then contend with Mistle. If successful, the PCs can proceed to the bridge, where they must battle the Slissh-Ikil's gargoyles, who have been drawn to the area by the sound of battle. Should the PCs opt for the "free bridge" and avoid Mistle's toll area, they can potentially avoid an encounter with the wizard and his minions, but they must then engage in a precarious fight against the gargoyles on the shaky svirfneblin suspension bridge, possibly drawing the ogres and Mistle into the conflict anyway. In the process, the PCs learn of two svirfneblin slaves held by the evil wizard. To free them, they must return to Mistle's lair, defeat the wizard (if they haven't already), deal with the other bridge crossers, and contend with Mistle's many guards. Once these encounters have been overcome, the PCs are free to travel on their way.

FOR THE DUNGEON MASTER

The PCs can approach this encounter from any direction, but ideally should come from one of the southern passages. A party that moves quietly or sends a scout ahead can hear noise from the ogres' guard post up to 120 feet away with a successful DC 20 Listen check, the ogres being very boisterous and loud. The chasm is roughly 200 feet deep, with a large river flowing along its bottom. PCs can negotiate all parts of the encounter area without any risk of falling into the chasm. When moving on the ledges, however, the party is assumed to be traveling in single file. Anyone engaging in combat on the narrow ledges must make a successful DC 10 Balance check each round or fall into the gorge. A successful DC 30 Climb check by a falling PC means the character has managed to snag a ledge as she falls, arresting her descent.

Anyone falling into the chasm can make a DC 15 Reflex save to land in the deepest part of the river and sustain 2d6 points of non-lethal damage and 16d6 points of normal damage. Failure indicates the character lands in the shallows and sustains a full 20d6 points of lethal damage. PCs who survive a fall in the shallows are in some ways better off. A simple DC 5 Swim check indicates the PC can grab hold of the chasm wall and begin to climb (DC 15) the slippery gorge walls back to the ledge from which she fell.

Those who fall into the deeper river risk being swept off into the deadly Underdark. The water moves with a speed of 60 feet, and the river does not develop a shoreline for four miles. A PC in the water will be carried this distance before being deposited on a rocky shore deeper in the Underdark, dead or alive. The river is considered rough water, requiring PCs who fall in to make a successful DC 15 Swim check each round or risk drowning (see the *DUNGEON MASTER's Guide* for details on drowning). A

character can swim to the chasm walls with another successful DC 15 Swim check, and attempt to grab the rough walls and stop her progress in the river with a successful DC 15 Strength check, followed by DC 15 Climb checks to reach a stable ledge. If you're not prepared to deal with one of your PCs being separated from her companions by a great distance, you can always assume a friendly group of svirfneblin finds the wayward PC and guides her back to her companions once she manages to break free of the river's clutches.

Travelers frequently come through this area, and one such group of toll payers has engaged the ogres in negotiations for crossing. They could easily be a factor in the course of the adventure (see area 1) Prior to running this encounter, you can determine whether other travelers, in addition to Kaul'riah and her bodyguards, are paying a toll and, if necessary, determine the exact composition of any additional encountered group.

DUNGEON FEATURES

Walls: All walls in areas 3–6 and 8 (including the pathways, Mistle's secret rooms, the sides of the cliffs, and the jutting rock formation in which the secret rooms are found) and the areas within 20 feet of the stone bridge (area 9) are considered hewn stone. These areas are very smooth and slightly slippery. The Climb check DCs for these areas is 25. Walls in the chasm are unworked stone (Climb DC 15).

Wind: Drafts and gusts of severe wind are frequent in this area of the chasm. Ranged attacks and Listen checks in areas 7, 9, 10, 11, 13, and 14 are made at a –2 penalty. The gusts make flying conditions unpredictable as creatures are buffeted unexpectedly from different angles. Flying creatures' speed is reduced by 10 feet and one maneuverability class while flying over the chasm and in the areas mentioned above. The gargoyles and Mistle are accustomed to the winds and therefore receive no penalty while flying.

1. GUARD POST (EL VARIES)

Light and sounds tell you that there is something or someone ahead. A cool, steady breeze laden with scents of spiced wine and burning coals brushes your face as you turn a bend in the natural passage. As you approach a cavern of some sort, the light is partially blocked by a huge figure. A rough, broken challenge comes from a grizzled voice: "Who'se it dat goes out dere?"

One ogre watches each southern passage, awaiting travelers. These ogres are not alert (–5 penalty to Spot and Listen checks) and can be surprised if the PCs attempt to sneak up on them and move quietly and swiftly.

The figure is an ogre, although a rather neat and well-dressed one. Pieces of plate and chain armor are mixed with leather jacks and leggings, both studded and plain. The ogre holds a huge, well-polished halberd. The overwhelming smell of sweat mixed with spiced wine surrounds him like a second coat of armor, and when the huge ogre grins, his smile shows teeth stained yellow and black.

As the ogre steps away from the entrance, you can see fully into the cavern. Straight ahead is a large table, ogre-sized and roughly hewn, with several more of the giants sitting around it, eating and joking. They occasionally dip their bowls into something cooking in a small black cauldron over a large, rusty brazier. To one side of the cavern is a small lighted alcove in which shadows betray the occupants' movements.

Beyond the large table is a huge rock formation jutting out into and flanked by a huge chasm. Torches set in sconces reveal three more features of the rock formation: smooth walls leading up to some sort of natural balcony overlooking both the chasm and the ogre's cavern; two narrow paths running west and north alongside the rock; and, far beyond, a lit stone bridge crossing the chasm.

Two ogres approach from the rock formation, where they were leaning and sharing a smoke from a huge, gnarled pipe while engaging in an earnest discussion with another group. One of the ogres is larger than the others, almost 10 feet tall, wearing a shiny breastplate and a tremendous black leather belt clasped with a silver skull buckle. This beast carries a monstrosously large black and silver trident. His companion looks more like the ogre who initially greeted you. The three figures with whom these two were talking remain by the pillar. Two of them look to be burly, muscular, hairy humanoids wearing scale mail and carrying sheathed longswords. Each also carries a heavy shield and a composite longbow. The third figure is a female drow dressed in wispy, silken black robes belted with a silver chain. Her white hair is twisted into an intricate knot and on the top of her head, and a number of pouches and fetishes adorn her belt. She looks irritated with

this delay and turns to regard you with a sneer of disdain.

The largest ogre stops 20 feet away and speaks. "Name's Graak. Youse p'pared to pays th' toll?"

Creatures (EL 9 or 11): These guardians are the toll collectors, the ogre band that Mistle encountered and eventually hired. After the initial challenge, Graak is the only one who deals with the PCs. Once any dealings have begun, all the ogres return to the table to drink wine, with the exception of the passage guards. Despite their casual appearance, each of the ogres keeps an eye on the PCs and a weapon close at hand. Should combat break out, the guards immediately join the fray.

Graak is not very intelligent, but his cunning and sense of self-preservation are much better than others of his species. He rules the guards with an iron fist, but is respected by the other ogres who have come to expect this in a leader. Graak's constant dealings with travelers have made him somewhat courteous for an ogre, and have increased his ability to judge character. Graak thinks Mistle is a good employer, although the ogre occasionally protests the smallness of the cut that the guards receive from the toll money. Mistle has proven himself to be powerful and has saved the ogre band more than once with his magic, so Graak affords the wizard much respect and even more distance. Graak's increased judgment of character has made him wary of the new derro guard, Haltik Wrath (see area 7), and the information he has received from the two ogres at that guard point only feeds his suspicions. Graak is good at collecting tolls from passers-by, and therefore has become rather cocky. He expects no less than 200 gp or its equivalent from each individual, but will not explicitly ask for that amount in hopes of getting more (it usually works with travelers new to the area).

SCALING THE ADVENTURE

"The Chasm Bridge" is intended for four 7th-level characters, but it can be modified for parties of different sizes or levels. Consider adapting the adventure as follows:

3rd- and 4th-level PCs: The adventure needs serious modification for PCs of this level. Run the adventure with the following (or similar) alterations:

- Make Graak a normal ogre, and make all the other ogres 1st-level orc warriors.
- Remove 1 level from each of the duergar.
- Make Haltik Wrath a normal derro.
- Make Slissh-Ikil a normal gargoyle, and his two gargoyle companions darkmantles under his control.

• Make Mistle a 5th- or 6th-level wizard. Eliminate his *staff of earth and stone* (he can have expended the last charges making his lair and the bridge).

5th- and 6th-level PCs: Run the adventure as written, but with the following alterations:

- Make Graak a 1st-level ogre fighter, and split his followers between 1st-level orc fighters and normal ogres.
- Make Haltik Wrath a normal derro.
- Make Slissh-Ikil an elite gargoyle, and his companions normal gargoyles.

- Make Mistle a 7th- or 8th-level wizard.

8th- and 9th-level PCs: The adventure as written is still mostly a challenge for characters of this level, but consider some of the following changes.

- Add one more ogre to area 1 and area 7.
- Make Haltik Wrath a 1st-level barbarian/1st-level rogue.
- Make Mistle a 10th- or 11th-level wizard.

10th- and 11th-level PCs: The adventure as written isn't challenging enough for PCs of this level. Make some alterations, as follows:

- Make Graak a 4th-level fighter, and add a pair of ogres to areas 1 and 7.
- Make Haltik Wrath a 2nd-level barbarian/2nd-level rogue.
- Make Mistle a 12th- or 13th-level wizard.
- Give Mistle the Leadership feat and a duergar cleric cohort.
- Advance Slissh-Ikil an additional 3 Hit Dice, and advance his two gargoyle companions to 7 Hit Dice, giving them stats identical to those provided for the gargoyle leader in this adventure.

Remember that changing the Encounter Levels should raise or lower the amount of treasure in the adventure. Consult page 51 in the *DUNGEON MASTER's Guide* (Tables 3-3, 3-4, and 3-5) to determine the treasure appropriate to the new encounters.



THE CHASM BRIDGE

1 square = 5 feet



The drow woman (actually an aranea named Kaul'riah in her humanoid shape) and her two bodyguards have been this way before, and she is negotiating a lower fee with Graak when the PCs arrive. See **Tactics**, below, for information on her group's behavior in any confrontation between Graak and the PCs.

Graak tries to evaluate the gold piece value of items but usually defers to the duergar money collectors in the alcove (area 2) for an accurate appraisal. Blocking one entrance to the alcove are several wooden boxes filled with rocks. The cauldron on the brazier contains hot wine. The table holds a variety of large utensils, carcasses, bowls of food, and pots with remnants of old meals in them. If the PCs decide to pay the toll, Graak leads them to area 2 so the payment can be secured and safeguarded. He then orders (in Giant) one of the other ogres to take the party to the beginning of the narrow ledge leading to area 7. If the PCs refuse to pay, Graak tries to avoid combat and offers the following alternative:

As he takes a hesitant step backward, Graak grips his trident and begins again in his halting speech. "Wait jus' a secon'. We guys don't likes the fightin' that much. I ain't gonna argue ov'r a few bits. Jus' take the utter way—it's a bit longer, but I guess it's wort the bits. The Master jus' won't likes it if you gone on his bridge without us collectin' the toll."

The ogre turns to one of his cronies and says, "You, Rurk. Take 'em to da wire bridge." An ogre at the table stands up and starts to walk across the cavern toward the western ledge. He turns his head and looks over his shoulder, waving to you to follow him, keeping an eye out for threatening moves.

➤ **Graak, Male Ogre Ftr2:** CR 5; Large Giant; HD 4d8+16 plus 2d10+8; hp 53; Init -1; Spd 30 feet (chainmail), base 40 ft.; AC 20, touch 8, flat-footed 20; Base Atk +5; Grp +16; Atk/Full Atk Large +2 trident +14 melee (2d6+9) or Large throwing axe +3 ranged (1d8+7); Space/Reach 10 ft./10 ft.; SQ darkvision 60 ft., low-light vision; AL CE; SV Fort +11, Ref +0, Will +4; Str 24, Dex 8, Con 18, Int 8, Wis 13, Cha 8.

Skills: Climb +10, Listen +4, Spot +4. **Feats:** Cleave, Improved Sunder, Power Attack, Toughness, Weapon Focus (trident).

Possessions: Large chainmail, Large heavy wooden shield, Large +2 trident, four Large throwing axes, silver dwarf skull belt buckle, pouch containing 14 pp, 31 gp, and 14 gems (10 gp each).

➤ **Rurk, Mahk, Torbo, Plud, and Margh, Male Ogres (5):** hp 29 each; *Monster Manual* 199, except Large halberd +8 melee (2d8+7) or Large javelin (1d8+5).

➤ **Kaul'riah, Female Aranea:** hp 24; *Monster Manual* 15 except AC 14, touch 13, flat-footed 12.

Possessions: Bag of holding (Type I) carrying spiderweb silks (750 gp), Underdark fungal spices (600 gp), and lizardskin (enough to make two suits of hide armor, 150 gp); *ring of protection +1*; *wand of magic missile* (3rd level, 23 charges).

➤ **Yeish and Lobarg, Male Hobgoblin Ftr1:** CR 1; HD 1d10+2; hp 12; Init +1; Spd 20 ft. (scale mail), base 30 ft.; AC 17, touch 11, flat-footed 16; Base Atk +1; Grp +2; Atk/Full Atk master-

work longsword +4 melee (1d8+1) or javelin +2 ranged (1d6+1); Space/Reach 5 ft./5 ft.; SQ darkvision 60 ft.; AL LE; SV Fort +4, Ref +1, Will +0; Str 13, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 9, Wis 10, Cha 8.

Skills: Jump +0*, Listen +2, Move Silently +2*, Spot +3. **Feats:** Alertness, Weapon Focus (longsword).

*Includes -3 armor check penalty.

Possessions: Masterwork scale mail, heavy wooden shield, masterwork longsword, six javelins, belt pouch with 24 gp.

Tactics: If combat occurs, Graak runs toward area 2 while the other ogres battle the PCs. One of the ogres throws the cauldron of hot wine to cover Graak's retreat. The cauldron is an improvised weapon with a 10-foot range, so the ogre using it suffers a -4 penalty to its attack roll plus any penalties for range increments. The cauldron itself deals 1d8 points of damage, plus any additional Strength damage. Also, any character struck by the cauldron takes an additional 1d6 points of damage from the scalding hot wine. Characters in adjacent squares take 1 point of splash damage from the wine. The next round, Graak or one of the money-collecting duergar in the alcove blows a horn that hangs from the wall in area 2. This warns Mistle and the guards at area 7 (see **Development**).

Kaul-riah watches a battle between the PCs and Mistle's minions with great interest. She secretly hopes the PCs defeat the ogres so she doesn't have to pay the toll, but she also doesn't want to fall in Mistle's bad graces and be forced to pay an even higher fee for not helping. She observes the combat quietly for 4 rounds. If she thinks the PCs are getting the upper hand, she runs to area 7 shouting an alert to the guards (if they're still there). When most of them run up the passage to area 1, Kaul-riah takes that opportunity to scamper across the bridge, bodyguards in tow. If the ogres seem to be winning the day, Kaul-riah assumes her natural form and uses the occasional spell or web to make life more difficult for the PCs, but nothing overtly hostile (if they manage to turn the tide, she doesn't want a group of angry adventurers breathing down her neck). This way, she hopes to secure a lower toll from the ogres through her demonstration of aid on their behalf. The aranea's bodyguards ready actions to attack anyone who attacks them or their mistress.

Development: If the PCs take the alternate route, a successful DC 15 Listen check reveals the sound of smothered laughter from the ogres left behind just as the PCs leave for area 11. Proceed to area 11 if the PCs opt for this course of action. If a fight breaks out here, Mistle arrives on the southern ledge (area 3) overlooking this chamber in 2 rounds, and one more ogre, the four duergar, and Haltik (all from area 7) arrive on the scene in 4 rounds.

If the PCs pay, Graak assumes they're wealthy and as soon as they head for area 7, he and one ogre move to ambush the PCs on the ledge leading to the bridge. Reinforcements arrive at this fight from area 7 within 1 round, and Mistle has a chance to hear the altercation if he succeeds at a DC 20 Listen check (made at -2 due to the high winds). If Graak or two of the other ogres fall, a remaining guard makes a dash for area 1 to alert the



remaining ogres and blow the horn to get Mistle's attention. He arrives 2 rounds later.

Treasure: The ogres have treasure among them amounting to 53 pp, 160 gp, and two gold chains (600 gp and 350 gp). Graak's belt buckle is actually a dwarf's skull dipped in silver, and it is worth 350 gp.

2. THE ALCOVE (EL 5)

A small lighted alcove here is apparently used by the toll collectors to store their takings and make change. A 4-foot-high table nearly blocks one entrance to this cave, while the other entrance is blocked by wooden boxes filled with rocks, stacked 7 feet high.

On the table are an abacus, several sheets of parchment, a few quills, and an inkwell. Behind the table are a 3-foot-high bench and a large iron chest, closed and locked. Hanging on the wall above the chest is a brass horn flanked by two sconces holding lit torches.

Creatures: Two duergar act as the money changers and collectors. Each is dressed in chain armor and wears a sheathed dwarven waraxe at his belt. When conducting toll business, one duergar stays on the bench to make deals while the other stands by the chest in order to secure the monies or make change. The

duergar by the chest has a large key hidden beneath his armor, attached to a chain around his neck. The key opens the chest. Mistle comes down to collect the money every day, which is why it only olds a little wealth.

➤ **Meriketh and Azorrikalin, Male Duergar War3 (2):** CR 3; Medium Humanoid (dwarf); HD 3d8+9; hp 26 each; Init +1; Spd 20 ft.; AC 18, touch 11, flat-footed 17; Base Atk +3; Grp +5; Atk/Full Atk dwarven waraxe +5 melee (1d10+2/×3) or heavy crossbow +4 ranged (1d10/19–20); Space/Reach 5 ft./5 ft.; SA duergar traits, spell-like abilities; SQ darkvision 120 ft., duergar traits; AL NE; SV Fort +6, Ref +2, Will +0; Str 14, Dex 13, Con 17, Int 12, Wis 8, Cha 6.

Skills: Appraise +4 (+6 stone and metal), Craft (trapmaking) +4, Craft (stonemasonry) +6, Listen +3, Move Silently +6, Spot +3. **Feats:** Alertness, Weapon Focus (dwarven waraxe).

Possessions: Chainmail, heavy wooden shield, dwarven waraxe, heavy crossbow with 20 bolts, pouch with 30 gp and 3 gems (10 gp each).

See the *Monster Manual* page 91 for duergar special abilities.

Tactics: If a battle breaks out, one of the duergar immediately moves toward the horn and blows it if Graak has not come to the alcove. Both draw their axes and use *invisibility* as long as possible, but they will fight fiercely to defend the money (Mistle might reward them if they survive).

Trap (EL 5): The chest is trapped; if opened without the key, it emits a poison gas in a 5-foot-radius cloud around the chest.

➤ **Burnt Othur Fumes Trap:** CR 5; manual reset; gas; multiple targets (all targets in a 5-ft.-by-5-ft. area); never miss; onset delay (2 rounds); poison (ungol dust, DC 15 Fortitude save resists, 1 Cha/1d6 Cha plus 1 Cha drain); Search DC 20; Disable Device DC 16.

Development: If the horn is sounded, Mistle and his remaining guards arrive on the scene in 2 rounds, as described in area 1.

Treasure: The chest contains 70 cp, 62 sp, 40 gp, 10 pp, 4 moss agates (10 gp), and 2 peridots (50 gp). It also holds two jeweled rings (100 gp each) and one emerald pendant (200 gp).

3. THE SOUTH BALCONY

This natural and magic-made balcony is 15 feet above the floor of the ogres' cavern and commands a view of most of area 1 and about 50 feet north along the narrow ledge that runs toward the stone bridge. The stone of this rock formation is very smooth and slightly slippery, making it very difficult to climb (see "For the Dungeon Master"). The balcony itself has a 4-foot-high stone wall running along its outer edge. It is at this location that the PCs might see the master, Mistle the crippled wizard. If negotiations in area 1 take a significant amount of time or grow particularly heated, allow Mistle a DC 15 Listen check to notice events at the guard post. He then moves near the lip, still out of sight, and listens in, hoping to ascertain whether the PCs are a threat. If negotiations continue further, he eventually gets curious enough to get a look at these stubborn travelers. If this occurs, read the following:

You notice a gaunt figure looking down from a balcony on the rock formation that juts out into the chasm. The figure is hooded, so it is hard to distinguish any facial details, but it does seem to be leaning on a crutch and wearing at least one wand sheath on its belt.

♣ **Mistle, Male Human Wiz9:** CR 9; Medium Humanoid (human); HD 9d4+18; hp 45; Init +6; Spd 15 ft.; AC 14, touch 12, flat-footed 12; Base Atk +4; Grp +3; Atk/Full Atk masterwork dagger +4 melee (1d4–1) or touch spell +6 ranged touch (effect varies); Space/Reach 5 ft./5 ft.; SA spells; AL NE; SV Fort +8, Ref +6, Will +7; Str 8, Dex 14, Con 14, Int 18, Wis 10, Cha 12.

Skills: Concentration +14, Decipher Script +11, Knowledge (arcana) +16, Knowledge (architecture & engineering) +16, Knowledge (dungeoneering) +16, Spellcraft +18. **Feats:** Craft Wondrous Item, Empower Spell, Extend Spell, Great Fortitude, Improved Initiative, Scribe Scroll.

Wizard Spells Prepared (4/5/5/4/3/1; base save DC = 14 + spell level): 0—*detect magic* ×2, *mage hand*, *message*; 1st—*magic missile* ×3, *feather fall*, *unseen servant*; 2nd—*invisibility*, *scorching ray*, *see invisibility*, *extended shield*, *web*; 3rd—*fireball*, *fly*, *lightning bolt*, *slow*; 4th—*dimension door*, *empowered scorching ray*, *Evard's black tentacles*; 5th—*transmute rock to mud*.

Spellbooks: Mistle's spellbooks (hidden in area 6) contains the following spells, in addition to those listed above: 0—all; 1st—*alarm*, *burning hands*, *cause fear*, *disguise self*, *identify*, *mage armor*; 2nd—*arcane lock*, *bear's endurance*, *cat's grace*, *knock*, *rope trick*, *touch of idiocy*; 3rd—*deep slumber*, *dispel magic*, *displacement*, *magic circle against good*, *protection from energy*; 4th—*confusion*, *remove curse*, *stone shape*; 5th—*cone of cold*, *overland flight*.

Possessions: Masterwork dagger, *bracers of armor* +2, *belt of fly* (1/day), *cloak of resistance* +1, *headband of intellect* +2, *staff of earth and stone* (11 charges), *wand of magic missile* (5th level, 18 charges), *wand of hold person* (5th level, 9 charges), scroll of *dimension door* (9th level), scroll of *dispel magic* (9th level), scroll of *fly* (9th level), silver charm (75 gp).

Tactics: If combat with the ogres breaks out while Mistle is watching, or if the wizard is called to the balcony by the horn or sounds of battle, he assists the ogres by first casting defensive spells like *transmute rock to mud* and *web*. If the battle is definitely going against the ogres, Mistle uses his *lightning bolt* and *magic missile* spells. He also uses his *staff of earth and stone* (which he uses as his crutch) to block passage along the ledge to his bridge, if the characters try to run that way. The balcony wall provides cover for Mistle (+4 bonus to AC and a +2 bonus to Reflex saving throws). If he is badly injured (having lost half his hit points), he moves back into his abode, heals himself with his potions (see area 5), and uses his remaining magic to hide or escape. He then tries to annoy and injure the party, using magic and wile, in retribution for their ruining his profitable business.

Development: The *staff of earth and stone's* command words are "go" (for the *passwall* ability) and "shovel" (for the *move earth* ability). They can be found on a small silver charm that Mistle wears on a chain around his neck. The activating command for the *wand of hold person* is "Stop, thief!" and that for the *wand of magic missile* is "Strike true!" These are not written anywhere. Both wands are kept in a small quiver that Mistle wears at all times. Mistle's ground speed is half normal because of his missing leg, although he has a number of options available to him for greater mobility, including his *fly* and *dimension door* spells.

If the PCs don't cause much noise down in area 1, they likely don't alert Mistle to their presence. He is notified someone has headed to the gargoyle's bridge (area 11) 2 rounds after the PCs leave, and he prepares to face the PCs' anger at that point, organizing his ogres into defensive postures, casting any long-duration defense magic, and taking up a position in this area where he can see the passage to area 11. Mistle and his guards assume an attack is coming until the guard escorting the PCs from area 1 returns to tell them differently, or until 30 minutes have passed, at which point Mistle returns to his chambers and the ogres either go in search of their comrade (if he has yet to return) or move as a group (Graak stays behind to watch area 1) to discover his fate from one of the gargoyles.

Though vengeful, embittered, and having an uncomfortable interest in gaining power over evil creatures, Mistle also has a

strong wit and is an engaging conversationalist. He has many stories about the Underdark lands, and he possesses a remarkable speaking voice and aura of authority. He finds talkative, good-aligned characters to be bores but tolerates anyone who does not dispute his personal domain in this area.

4. LABORATORY AND LIVING AREA (EL VARIES)

The black-brown walls of this cave clearly show the telltale smoothness of magical alteration. The darkness of the walls makes the place seem dim by absorbing much of the light coming from a small candelabrum and two torches.

The room is well furnished, and all of the pieces show signs of modest elegance. Along the western wall is a 12-foot-long stone table covered with various stone implements: jars, beakers, bottles with stoppers, dishes, and a mortar and pestle. Underneath this long table is a shelf running its full length. On it rest five larger stone jars, all topped with stone lids.

Along the eastern wall are a wooden table and chair, a stone shelf attached to the wall, and a smaller stone table about 3 feet across. On the wooden table are various pieces of dirty stone flatware, plates, and cups. The shelf holds two large stone bowls and a single stoppered stone jar. On the stone table are a book, a glass bottle filled with liquid, a good amount of parchment, and a quill and ink bottle. A small, unlit, black brazier sits just to the south of the stone table. A bit of color comes to the room from a large, tattered rug on the floor and a small tapestry hanging from two stone pegs on the southeast wall.

This room has four exits: a stairway leading down to the west, two narrow passages leading north and south, and a stone door leading southwest. The stone door has four doorknobs.

All of the stone items were made by Mistle with the *stone shape* spell. The containers on the large stone table contain various ordinary and extraordinary items for use in spellcasting: black bird feathers, cave insect hind legs, soot, salt, talc, powdered silver, gum arabic, spider webs, animal fur, bits of turtle shell, molasses, soft black clay, and water. (These are the material components for some of Mistle's spells.) Of the five larger jars under the table, two are empty, one contains water, and two contain blood (ogre and duergar). The bowls on the shelf in the eastern wall contain lichen and small cave mushrooms. The large jar on that same shelf holds water. The parchments have general writings and some notes on the behavior of duergar, ogres, and gargoyles, but one sheet is an arcane scroll of *mending*. The book is an empty wizard's traveling spellbook. The tapestry and rug are worthless. The brazier is filled with soot and the remains of some burnt charcoal. This room and the one to the southwest (area 5) give good indication of Mistle's taste for both austerity and comfort. The past year in his new home has not made Mistle unhappy. On the contrary, he has found his life underground lacking very little. Caravans

and other underground merchants pass over the toll bridge often enough to keep the ogres' stomachs full of wine and all of Mistle's personal tastes well satisfied. The toll money is spent on items ranging from wooden furnishings (a luxury underground) to foodstuffs, spices, and coal.

Creatures (EL 9): Mistle spends most of his time here. If the PCs manage to sneak into this area, they find him berating one of the svirfneblin slaves for the state of the filthy lab equipment and dishes. The deep gnome is attached to a thick, 15-foot-long chain by a metal collar around his neck. The other end of the chain is fused to a steel spike driven into the floor at the base of the east wall. The chain has a hardness of 10 and 5 hit points, or it can be burst with a DC 26 Strength check.

☛ **Mistle:** hp 45; see area 3 for details.

☛ **Toroukil, Male Svirfneblin Slave Exp2:** CR —; Small Humanoid (gnome); HD 2d6; hp 7; Init +1; Spd 20 ft; AC 12, touch 12, flat-footed 11; Base Atk +1; Grp -4; Atk/Full Atk unarmed strike +1 melee (1d2-1); Space/Reach 5 ft./5 ft.; SA spell-like abilities; SQ darkvision 120 ft., gnome traits, svirfneblin traits; SR 13; AL N; SV Fort +0, Ref +1, Will +4; Str 8, Dex 13, Con 11, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 7.

Skills: Appraise +3, Balance +3, Climb +2, Knowledge (architecture and engineering) +5, Knowledge (dungeoneering) +3, Profession (engineer) +8, Listen +4, Spot +4, Survival +4 (+6 underground). **Feats:** Skill Focus (Profession—engineer).

Tactics: If the PCs surprise Mistle here, he is caught completely off guard and hasn't cast any of his defensive magic. At the first available opportunity, he casts *dimension door*, appearing in area 1 and alerting his guards. If his guards are missing or slain, he casts *fly* and heads to area 7 to surround himself with allies before attempting to battle the intruders. Mistle tries to avoid a fight here at all costs. If prevented from using *dimension door* (via a counterspell or *dimensional anchor* effect), he flees (via *fly* or just hobbling away) where he thinks he might have surviving allies. If he can, he uses *mage hand* to trigger a knob on the southwest door, triggering a trap to distract the interlopers while he flees.

Development: If Mistle is prevented from leaving, he's perfectly willing to negotiate, although he'll fight before parting with his personal magic items.

Traps (EL 3 and 2): The door to the southwest was built by the duergar and contains some traps of their own making. The four doorknobs are set vertically into the center of the 7-foot-high door. The top knob is false but triggers one of the other two traps (50% chance of either trap being triggered). The second knob down is the real one, opening the door through a system of weights and a counterbalance. The third knob releases a trap that drops large rocks onto the area in front of the door. The bottom knob releases the pins that hold the door in place, causing it to fall forward on the character in front of the door, dealing damage and pinning the character beneath the slab of heavy stone. Moving the fallen door requires a DC 22 Strength check.

❖ **Stone Door:** 6 in. thick; Hardness 8; hp 90; break DC 28; Open Lock DC 30.

⚡ **Falling Rocks Trap:** CR 3; mechanical; touch trigger; repair reset; Atk +10 melee (4d6, stone blocks); Search DC 25; Disable Device DC 20.

⚡ **Falling Door Trap:** CR 2; mechanical; touch trigger; repair reset; Atk +10 melee (3d6, stone slab); Search DC 25; Disable Device DC 20.

5. BEDCHAMBER (EL VARIES)

Smaller than the outer cave, this room is more sparsely furnished, having only four pieces of stone furniture: a bed with a mattress of lichen in burlap sacks, a simple block of stone for a nightstand, a table with shelves, and a high-backed chair softened by three threadbare pillows. The table and shelves hold a collection of knick-knacks.

A short, bald gnome wearing a metal collar attached to a heavy chain stands in the room, holding a feather duster and looking extremely surprised at your entrance.

If Mistle has been injured in combat with the PCs, he retreats to this room and uses the healing potions from his nightstand (see **Treasure**, below).

Creature (EL 10): Several years back, a party of merchants bartered their way across Mistle's bridge by trading him a scroll of *planar binding*. Mistle used the scroll to bind an invisible stalker he uses as his personal bodyguard. The stalker was resentful at its binding at first, but over time it has grown accustomed to its position. Mistle treats it with more respect than any of his other underlings, and the stalker doesn't have to do much more than spy on the gargoyles and make sure the svirfneblin slaves don't get out of line.

This is the second svirfneblin slave given to Mistle by the gargoyles. The chain attached to his collar is 10 feet long and staked in the southwest corner of the room. The chain has a hardness of 10 and 5 hit points, or it can be burst with a DC 26 Strength check.

❖ **Mistle:** hp 45; see area 3 for details.

❖ **Invisible Stalker:** hp 52; *Monster Manual* 160.

❖ **Derilogit, Male Svirfneblin Slave Exp2:** hp 7; see area 4 for details.

Tactics: The stalker waits 3 rounds before attacking intruders, or once the door shuts behind them (see Mistle's tactics, below), whichever happens first. The stalker and the wizard have worked out their plan of attack and know what to expect of each other. Mistle hides here invisibly after drinking his healing potions, waiting for the characters to get the full effects of his trapped door. If they all enter the room, the wizard sneaks out and closes and locks the door, trapping the PCs in the room with his invisible stalker. He listens at the door to the sounds of battle. If it sounds like his stalker is defeated, he collects as many remaining valuables as he can (especially his spellbooks from area 6) and flies away down the chasm, looking for better prospects.

Treasure: The seventeen knick-knacks are various nonmagical figurines of humans, elves, and animals, as well as some stone jars and vases (worth 4d10 sp each). In the bottom of one of the vases, under 2 inches of murky water, is a *ring of clumsiness* that appears to be a *ring of jumping*. The vase must be turned upside-down for this item to be noticed. Underneath the bed is a loose stone set flush with the floor. A DC 20 Search check reveals its presence. In a hole under the stone are Mistle's remaining revenues from the tolls: 455 sp in a burlap bag, 230 gp and 55 pp in another bag, and a small unlocked coffer containing 11 gems (50 gp × 4), 200 gp × 3, and 500 gp). The nightstand is another duergar work of genius. A successful DC 22 Search check on the nightstand reveals a secret compartment containing three *potions of cure moderate wounds* and an arcane scroll of *fly and wall of stone*. The secret compartment can be opened by sharply hitting the left side of the nightstand three times.

6. STAIRWAY, LEDGE, AND SECRET ENTRANCE

This is Mistle's front door and porch. Though he rarely leaves, when he does he enters and exits his abode through the use of a *flyspell*. The PCs can approach this area either from area 4 or by flying or climbing to the ledge. The walls on this rock formation are slightly slippery and very smooth. The ledge is roughly 6 feet wide and is supported by the surrounding rock. This outcropping can hold up to 500 pounds of weight. The wall behind the ledge appears to be smooth and featureless. The secret door can be found with a successful DC 25 Search check.

❖ **Stone Secret Door:** 3 in. thick; Hardness 8; hp 45; break DC 25; Open Lock DC 25.

The secret door is opened by pressing a small knob of rock underneath the northeasternmost edge of the ledge. The door slides straight down; a lip on the inside catches the door from falling further. To replace the door, the lip must be pulled up past a catch on the inner right side of the doorway. A successful DC 25 Search check focused on the stairs reveals that rapping hard on the second step from the top of the staircase opens a secret compartment similar to that in the nightstand in area 5. Here can be found Mistle's traveling spellbooks containing all the spells mentioned in area 3. These books are not here if Mistle has already left the area.

7. APPROACH TO THE BRIDGE (EL VARIES)

The description below assumes the party is approaching from the south. See area 10 for the northern approach perspective.

As you make your way along the narrow pathway leading to the bridge, you hear the howl of strong wind and in the far distance, the rush of water.

If the PCs stop to listen at any point on the way to this area, allow them Listen checks (DC 15 + 1 per 10 feet between the bridge and the PCs' location) to hear the low conversations of the guards. The guards have an equally poor chance of detecting

the PCs' approach, although you should grant them Listen checks to do so. All Listen checks here and in areas 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, and 13 are made at a -2 penalty due to the severe winds and the sound of rushing water below. If the characters do not detect the guards' presence, read or paraphrase the following:

Rounding the final bend in the ledge pathway brings you face to face with quite a motley crew of creatures: two large ogres, dressed similarly to those previously encountered, four duergar in plate armor wielding short spears and warhammers, and a crazed-looking, hairy, dwarflike personage in ragged studded leather armor holding a huge crossbow of some type.

Creatures (EL 9): If the PCs gave Graak and his gang any trouble and they sounded the horn, only one ogre remains here, anxiously awaiting word from area 1 that everything is clear. The ogre is on alert in this case and is ready for trouble. The other guards have moved to area 1 to fight the troublemakers. If no alarm was sounded, the guards here have little chance to hear sounds of combat in area 1 (Listen DC 20, made at -2 due to the severe gusts of wind) and don't notice the PCs until they round the bend. Unfortunately, the winds and distance mean the PCs aren't likely to notice the guards, either (see above).

The guards here have no reservations about roughing up a few surprised travelers, especially since they are away from the influence of Graak. The malicious manners of the duergar and derro only support such bullying and "fun": The shorter statured humanoids might encourage combat just to get some treasure, if the odds seem reasonable.

The derro, a recent addition to Mistle's guards, has been nothing but trouble for both Graak and Mistle. Haltik Wrath has received the support of the duergar guards and, especially since finding out about the unfair cut the guards get from the toll revenues, he has been concentrating on subverting both leaders' power bases. Recently, the derro sneaked away to negotiate with Slissh-Ikil, who presented Haltik with an *elixir of fire breath* as a pledge of his support. Details of combat plans or other cooperation have not as yet been worked out, though. Any combat in this area, however, is sure to draw Slissh-Ikil's interest, if not the gargoyles' presence.

A battle in this area might provide the opportunity that the derro and his supporters have been looking for. Haltik feels that the unknown potion he was given by Slissh-Ikil (an *elixir of fire breath*) could turn the tide. The derro will not use the elixir unless he feels it is the right time for rebellion.

➤ **Glomsh and Erl, Male Ogres (2):** hp 29 each; *Monster Manual* 199, except Large halberd +8 melee (2d8+7) or Large javelin (1d8+5).

➤ **Wevver, Jereck, Sarvilis, and Weeant, Male Duergar (4):** hp 25, 26, 26, 28; see area 2 for details.

➤ **Haltik Wrath, Male Derro Bbn1:** CR 4; Small Monstrous Humanoid; HD 3d8+9 plus 1d12+3; hp 36; Init +3; Spd 20 ft.; AC 20, touch 14, flat-footed 17; Base Atk +4; Grp +3; Atk/Full Atk Small masterwork short sword +9 melee (1d4+3/19–20) or Small +1 repeating heavy crossbow +9 ranged (1d8+1/19–20);

Space/Reach 5 ft./5 ft.; SA poison use, spell-like abilities, sneak attack +1d6; SQ madness, vulnerability to sunlight; SR 15; AL CE; SV Fort +7, Ref +7, Will +1; Str 16, Dex 16, Con 16, Int 8, Wis 4, Cha 19.

Skills: Bluff +4, Climb +5, Hide +9, Intimidate +5, Listen +1, Move Silently +7. **Feats:** Exotic Weapon Proficiency (repeating crossbow), Point Blank Shot.

Possessions: Small masterwork studded leather armor, Small buckler, Small masterwork short sword, Small +1 repeating heavy crossbow with 30 poisoned bolts, quiver with poison well (Medium spider venom; 1d6 Str/1d6 Str; Fort DC 14), *cloak of resistance* +1, *elixir of fire breath*, belt pouch with 16 gp, 2 ambers (100 gp each), 3 rock crystals (50 gp each), and 4 malachites (10 gp each).

See the *Monster Manual*, page 49, for derro special abilities.

Tactics: If approached from the south, the ogres and duergar move to attack. The ogres don't hesitate to stand behind their shorter companions and take swings over their heads. Meanwhile, Haltik takes shots at enemies not in melee with his crossbow. Once he runs out of arrows in one clip or is engaged in melee, he drops the crossbow, draws his short sword, and attempts to move into a position to flank with one of his companions.

8. NORTH BALCONY

This balcony is very similar to area 3. It commands a view of the stone bridge and most of the chasm area to the north, west, and east. The chances of seeing Mistle here are much less, however, unless some sort of battle has begun. If, however, the alarm is sounded here, it takes Mistle 2 rounds to respond. His actions upon arriving are similar to those taken for a battle at area 1 (see the **Tactics** section of that area for details): defensive spells first, switching to offensive spells if the battle gets heated, and using his wands only if his business or his life is in jeopardy.

9. THE BRIDGE

The bridge, the main feature of this chasm area, is a unique magical formation. Apparently, two natural ledges were altered and extended from either side of the chasm to create this bridge from the living rock. The bridge is narrow, only about 7 feet wide throughout its length. Two rough stone columns flank the entrance at either end of the bridge. On each stone column, a lit brand smokily burns in a torch sconce. Running along the sides of the bridge are stone railings about 4 feet high. The stone of the bridge is relatively smooth, although the underside of the bridge appears to be very rough.

Development: If the PCs approach from the north and refuse the verbal challenge of the guards on the south side (see area 10), a physical challenge is made to the characters on the bridge. The ogres, duergar, and derro have experience fighting on the bridge and have a specific plan of attack for such occasions. First, a final offer is made (by one of the duergar) to the PCs to pay the toll instead of fighting their way through. If the PCs refuse, the ogres



charge across the bridge, attempting to push the adventurers back to the opposite side. Two duergar follow the ogres closely, while the other two run to area 1 for help.

Haltik Wrath has found a way to safely climb along the rough underside of the bridge; he tries to get beneath the structure before the battle starts. Using the massive bodies of the ogres as a cover, he scampers beneath the bridge. PCs might notice him with a successful Spot check opposed by Haltik's Hide check. He receives a +4 circumstance bonus to this check. He then attempts to surprise attackers either on the bridge or near its northern entrance by leaping out from beneath the bridge and firing at them with his crossbow. The derro can carry his weapons when he climbs under the bridge. Mistle and the ogres from areas 1 arrive in 4 melee rounds if their help is summoned. The duergar in area 2 are left to guard the money kept there.

10. THE NORTHERN LEDGE

Read or paraphrase the following if the PCs reach this area from the northern passage:

The natural corridor through which you have been traveling suddenly opens onto a ledge that provides a panoramic view. To the immediate south and west, the ledge overlooks a deep chasm. In front of you, seemingly formed from the ledge itself, a bridge rises over the chasm and descends to meet a similar ledge on the opposite side. On that opposite ledge stand sev-

eral guards, their features obscured by the dimness pervading the chasm. Two larger figures are flanked by four or five smaller ones, and all seem to be holding weapons of some sort. Above the figures is some sort of balcony, carved from the stone of a great outcropping of rock. Rushing water can be heard, far below in the chasm.

One of the shorter guards moves forward and speaks: "This be the bridge of Mistle the Great. Stand where you are and prepare to pay the toll."

Characters who stand fast are met by the two ogres, who cross the bridge from area 7. These two guards then escort the party to the narrow pathway leading from area 7 to area 1. The toll-collecting procedure described at area 1 proceeds normally once the party arrives. If the PCs make threatening actions or attempt to cross the bridge unescorted, the guards at area 7 start their combat procedure (see area 9).

11. THE GARGOYLES' ALTERNATIVE (EL 7)

The PCs' ogre escort stops once he reaches the exposed ledge of this area, gesturing the PCs onward. He hesitates there, though, coughing loudly if the PCs seem to be attempting a stealthy approach, trying to get Slissh-Ikil's attention in area 12. He also wants to watch the gargoyles attack.

Read or paraphrase the following when the gargoyles spring their ambush:

As you round a bend in the narrow ledge beside the chasm, a rush of air whips past your face. Suddenly, you are set upon by thrashing horns, fangs, and claws, all seemingly made of stone.

Creatures: Slissh-Ikil probably hears the PCs moving along the ledge unless they take the precaution of moving stealthily. When Slissh-Ikil notices the PCs, he dispatches his two younger cohorts to attack the travelers once they're midway along the ledge toward area 13.

➤ **Slissh-Ikil, Male Advanced Gargoyle:** CR 5; Large Monstrous Humanoid (earth); HD 7d8+45; hp 77; Init +0; Spd 40 ft., fly 60 ft. (average); AC 17, touch 11, flat-footed 17; Base Atk +7; Grp +17; Atk claw +12 melee (1d6+6); Full Atk 2 claws +12 melee (1d6+6) and bite +10 melee (1d8+3) and gore +10 melee (1d8+3); Space/Reach 10 ft./10 ft.; SQ DR 10/magic, darkvision 60 ft., freeze; AL CE; SV Fort +8, Ref +6, Will +5; Str 23, Dex 12, Con 22, Int 8, Wis 11, Cha 10.

Skills: Hide +2 (+10 when concealed against stone), Listen +5, Spot +5. **Feats:** Flyby Attack, Multiattack, Toughness.

Possessions: Ring of protection +1, belt pouch with *potion of cure light wounds*.

➤ **Gargoyles (2):** hp 37 each; *Monster Manual* 113.

Tactics: Slissh-Ikil himself flies out and circles nearby to see how the youngsters do while attacking the PCs. PCs notice him with a successful DC 15 Spot check. The two young gargoyles focus their attacks on the character in the rear, knowing that they're making it difficult for characters further up the line to engage them in melee. If the gargoyles lose more than one-third of their hit points, they retreat to their lair at area 12. Under no circumstances will Slissh-Ikil assist the other gargoyles here. Fighting here exposes the characters to the risk of falling into the chasm. See "For the Dungeon Master" for details.

Development: Once the attack begins, the ogre grows noticeably excited, shouting a blow-by-blow account of the fight back to his companions through the tunnel to area 1 in Giant. He also shouts encouragement to the gargoyles, at several points calling out to them, "Getum more slaves fer da masta!" and "Dem stunties don' work fast enough!" in both Giant and rough Common. The ogre doesn't join in the fight against the PCs here, although if one steps within his reach, he tries to bull rush that PC off the ledge. If the PCs turn on the ogre, he flees back to area 1. Proceed with the combat description provided in that area for details.

12. THE GARGOYLES' LAIR

This large and smelly cave can be reached only by flying or climbing. It is 60 feet above the ledge where the area 11 encounter takes place. When the gargoyles are not attacking local travelers or foraging for food, they are found here. The bare cave contains a large amount of grit, gravel, and sand piled into three mounds. Sifting through the stuff in all the piles reveals the **Treasure**.

Treasure: The two mounds in the southern end of the cave together contain six gems (100 gp × 4, 500 gp, 1,000 gp), 46 gp,

36 sp, and 54 cp. These two piles also contain a good number of shiny but useless baubles. The pile of sand and gravel in the north end of the cave contains a large gold pendant in the shape of a snake (1,200 gp), 78 sp, and an alchemical silver short sword with scabbard.

13. BILLYGOATS' GRUFF

Ahead, at the end of the ledge, you can see a strange bridge. Two smooth stone pillars are sunk into stone ledges on each side of the chasm. Tangles of thick wire and rope are pulled through holes in the pillars and secured by wrapping and tying. Three twisted lines of wire and rope are stretched across the chasm, each attached to the others by a series of small twists of rope and wire. It appears that the bridge is crossed by walking on the lower of the three ropes while using the other two for handholds. The sound of rushing water can be heard from far below.

Unfortunately, it looks like you have other things to worry about right now. A large, winged, stone creature descends from the darkness of the chasm's ceiling to settle on the nearer of the bridge's foundation ledges.

From this location, Slissh-Ikil makes himself known to the travelers who dare to traverse his pathway and bridge. He presents himself in a menacing manner, either prior to the characters' crossing the bridge from the north or when the party is approximately 20 feet from the bridge approaching from the south. The bridge, upon closer inspection, is a unique and fine piece of workmanship, completed by the svirfneblin only a few months ago. It is an elegantly simple three-cable suspension bridge.

➤ **Slissh-Ikil:** hp 77; see area 11 for details.

➤ **Gargoyles (2):** hp 37 each; *Monster Manual* 113.

Tactics: Slissh-Ikil avoids combat by flying off the ledge just before the PCs reach him, and maneuvers around to harass characters as they try to cross the rope-and-wire bridge. If they are alive, the other two gargoyles join the fight. As described in area 11, they have grown accustomed to fighting in tandem, and coordinate their attacks efficiently.

Slissh-Ikil attacks only those PCs who cross the bridge, and only those with little or no armor. The gargoyle has learned several things from dealing with travelers on a frequent basis—particularly that the best fighters usually wear large pieces of shiny metal on their bodies. Slissh-Ikil attacks characters when they are approximately halfway across the bridge. He swoops down, slashing with his claws. A successful attack by the gargoyle requires a PC to make a DC 10 Balance check to avoid slipping and falling into the chasm. Fighting here exposes the characters to the risk of falling into the chasm. See "For the Dungeon Master" for details. Characters who slip on the bridge itself can make a DC 12 Reflex save to catch themselves on one of the ropes or wires. Slissh-Ikil concentrates his attacks on characters hanging from the rope bridge, if any.

Development: Defeating the gargoyles here ensures that the characters have safe passage onward into the Underdark. If



they turn back to deal with Mistle and his other minions, proceed to those respective areas.

14. THE WESTERN PASSAGE.

Read or paraphrase the following if the PCs arrive at this location from the northwest passage:

The natural stone passage you have been traveling in suddenly turns east, and a cool, misty draft blows into your face. A few feet beyond the turn, you break out of the passage onto

a ledge overlooking a vast and deep chasm. Through the dimness, you see the faint outline of a bridge about 50 feet south. The bridge spans the gap between the two ledges, and on the southernmost of these ledges you can see several shadowy figures.

Your choice of movement is fairly limited, however. The rough stone ledge you stand on narrows as it bends south, hugging the western cavern wall. The air is damp, drafty, and cold. The sound of rushing water can be heard in the distance.

Creatures: As the PCs approach the bridge, they are challenged by Slissh-Ikil (see area 13) and the two younger gargoyles. There is a 50% chance that PCs entering the area from this point will walk out while one or more of the gargoyles is clinging to the rocks nearby in a perfect position to attack the group from hiding.

➤ **Slissh-Ikil:** hp 77; see area 11 for details.

➤ **Gargoyles (2):** hp 37 each; *Monster Manual* 113.

CONCLUSION

Should the PCs successfully rid this area of greedy, scheming extortionists, they will have opened up passage through this portion of the Underdark for all future travelers. Liberating the area can be good (in the case of creatures such as the svirfneblin) and bad (since Mistle's group effectively kept more deadly crea-

tures from setting up a lair here). Another tyrant might settle in the area, taking up the mantle of toll collector, or the svirfneblin might decide to post a guard patrol in Mistle's old quarters to keep the area free of evil.

If the svirfneblin captives are freed, they are happily willing to lead the PCs to their home city, possibly serving as a springboard for future adventures in the Underdark for or with the deep gnomes, who are happy that their bridge can now be used as it was intended.

Should the PCs pass peacefully from the region, this encounter can be used over and over again as the PCs pass through this area, perhaps on their way to and from the surface or an underground base of operations. The adventurers can easily become involved in the intrigue of the encounter area, taking whichever side they feel inclined to support. Any of the NPCs can become well known to the characters and can be a good source of rumors and information leading to other adventures. The PCs might even strike up a (dangerous) friendship with Mistle, as it has been a long time since the wizard has spoken to other people from the surface. Though evil, he is still reasonably honest about his intentions and is fairly charismatic. He may offer the PCs lodging in his humble abode (which is safe, though uncomfortable), perhaps in trade for their tracking down some rare spell component or other required item. The wizard might also express an interest in accompanying the party on an expedition to find the associates (or their remains!) who left him here a year ago. Anyone who manages to regenerate Mistle's missing leg has won his support for the rest of his life, although he will remain in this area.

The unfriendlier denizens of the area can be a source of further adventure as well. The gargoyle, Slissh-Ikil, has contacts with other gargoyles and many evil creatures up and down the length of the chasm. This evil monster also keeps many important personages in the underworld informed on the comings and goings of travelers through this area. The derro and duergar both have contacts with others of their ilk in the immediate area. The toll-collecting duer-

gar could be skimming money off the top of the revenues, while Haltik Wrath's agreement with the gargoyles could become a major problem for Mistle and the chasm bridge guards.

Finally, a coalition of underground merchants and citizens may become fed up with paying the toll and hire the PCs to do away with Mistle and his crew. If successful, the PCs will then have to contend with the gargoyles to prevent the monsters from taking over the newly liberated bridge for their own purposes. Ω

From *DRAGON* #131:

After graduating from the University of Pennsylvania, Desmond Varady became an officer in the U.S. Army Signal Corps and is currently stationed just outside of London. Although the army keeps him busy, he finds time to read fantasy and science fiction, and to write short stories and fantasy adventure modules. "The Chasm Bridge" is a small part of his underground campaign area one in which the characters have yet to adventure on the legendary "surface world." This is his first appearance in DUNGEON.



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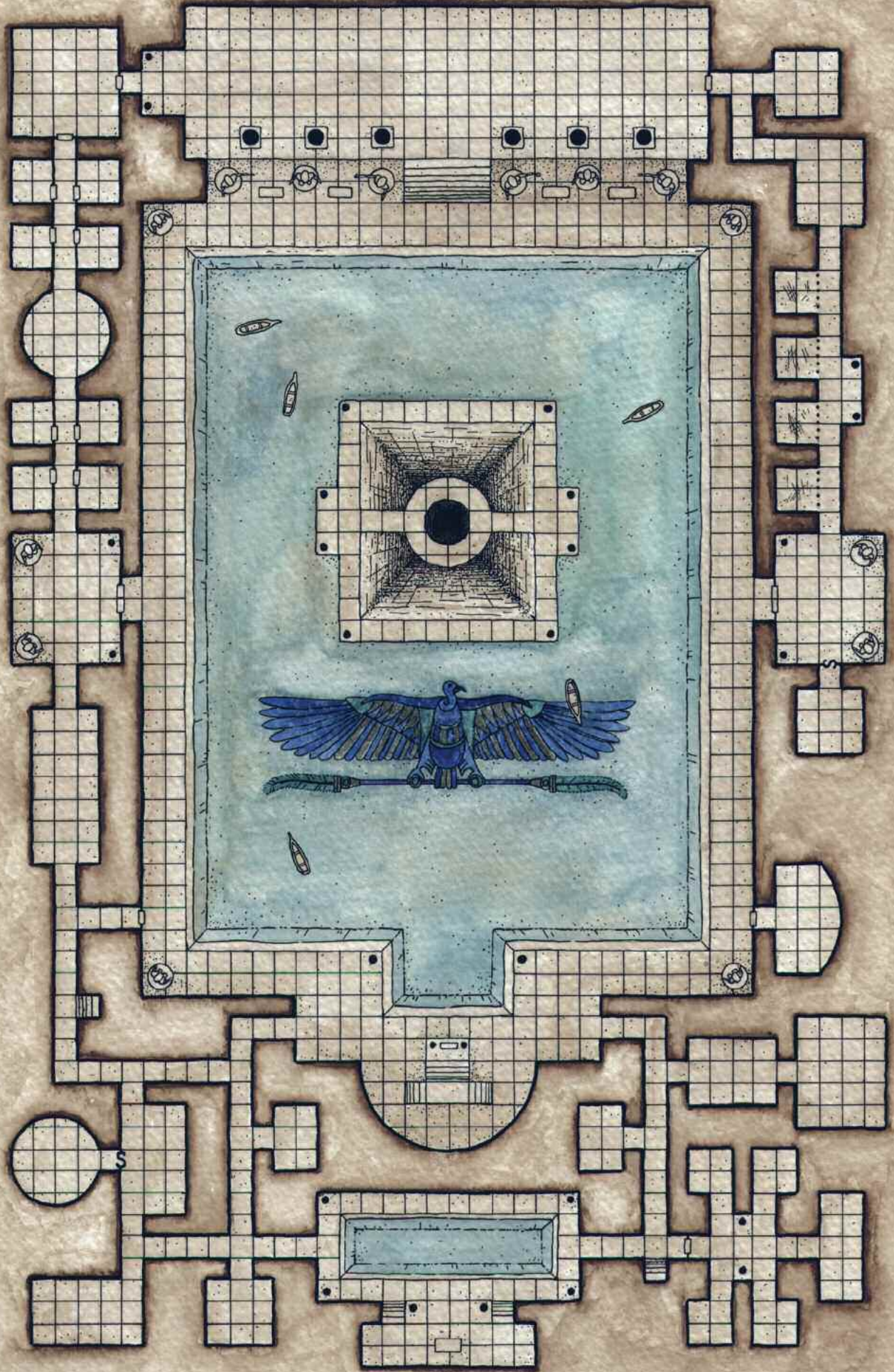


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PLAYER MATRIX

ABILITIES

ABILITY NAME	BASE SCORE	BASE BONUS	MODIFIED SCORE	MODIFIED BONUS	ABILITY NAME	BASE SCORE	BASE BONUS	MODIFIED SCORE	MODIFIED BONUS
STR STRENGTH					INT INTELLIGENCE				
DEX DEXTERITY					WIS WISDOM				
CON CONSTITUTION					CHA CHARISMA				

Dungeon
monster matrix

INITIATIVE	NORMAL	MODIFIED	CURRENT
MODIFIER			

COMBAT
ATTACKS & DAMAGE

ATTACK	MODIFIED	DAMAGE	MODIFIED	EFFECT	CASTER LEVEL

ACTIVE
SPELL EFFECTS

EFFECT	CASTER LEVEL

SAVING THROWS

	NORMAL	MODIFIED
FORTITUDE (CONSTITUTION)		
REFLEX (DEXTERITY)		
WILL (WISDOM)		

AC
ARMOR CLASS

NORMAL AC	TOUCH AC	FLAT-FOOTED

AC EFFECTS

SPECIAL ATTACKS

ATTACK	EFFECT

TREASURE
AND POSSESSIONS

SPECIAL QUALITIES

QUALITY	EFFECT

IMPORTANT SKILLS

SKILL	MODIFIER

IMPORTANT FEATS

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ABILITIES

ABILITY NAME	BASE SCORE	BASE BONUS	MODIFIED SCORE	MODIFIED BONUS	ABILITY NAME	BASE SCORE	BASE BONUS	MODIFIED SCORE	MODIFIED BONUS
STR STRENGTH					INT INTELLIGENCE				
DEX DEXTERITY					WIS WISDOM				
CON CONSTITUTION					CHA CHARISMA				

Dungeon
monster matrix

INITIATIVE	NORMAL	MODIFIED	CURRENT
MODIFIER			

COMBAT
ATTACKS & DAMAGE

ATTACK	MODIFIED	DAMAGE	MODIFIED	EFFECT	CASTER LEVEL

ACTIVE
SPELL EFFECTS

EFFECT	CASTER LEVEL

SAVING THROWS

	NORMAL	MODIFIED
FORTITUDE (CONSTITUTION)		
REFLEX (DEXTERITY)		
WILL (WISDOM)		

AC
ARMOR CLASS

NORMAL AC	TOUCH AC	FLAT-FOOTED

AC EFFECTS

SPECIAL ATTACKS

ATTACK	EFFECT

TREASURE
AND POSSESSIONS

SPECIAL QUALITIES

QUALITY	EFFECT

IMPORTANT SKILLS

SKILL	MODIFIER

IMPORTANT FEATS

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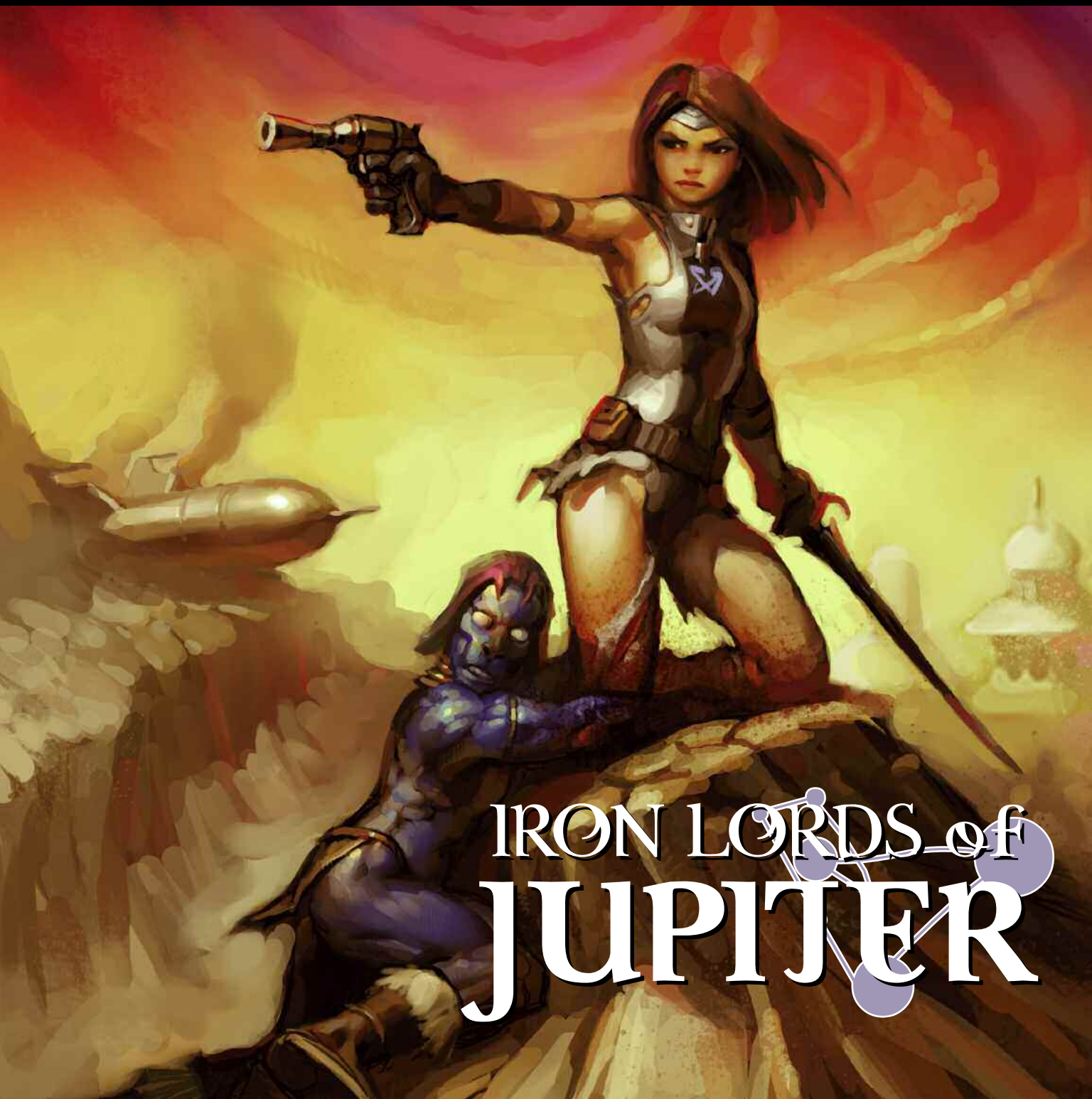
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Arcana Unearthed:

Designing a Different Player's Handbook

By Monte Cook

It's an idea I've had for years: Take the rules that everyone knows, but give players all-new, all-fresh character choices.

By now, we've all been playing Third Edition D&D for three years. The time has come for some new ideas to freshen up people's games. At least, that was my thinking when I decided to act on my idea and create a variant player's handbook. In doing so, I kept the core rules system the same but created new modular bits: races, classes, feats, spells, and so on. I call the book *Arcana Unearthed* (because it's what I wanted the First Edition book *Unearthed Arcana* to be long ago).

My experience as one of the Third Edition designers gave me special insight when creating my alternative handbook. Now, that doesn't mean I don't like D&D or the existing *Player's Handbook*. *Arcana Unearthed* isn't "the PH done right." It's an alternative. A different way of looking at the game. Sure, I used the opportunity to change some rules that, in hindsight, I don't think were as good as they could have been. But that wasn't my reason for doing the book.

This variant player's handbook approach makes *Arcana Unearthed* a unique product. It's a complete, stand-alone game (a substitute *Player's Handbook*, if you will), and it's a supplement for the game you already play. You can use just *Arcana Unearthed* for all your races, classes, spells, and so on, or you can add them—or just some of them—to your existing campaign. Because it's the same core rules, it's all compatible.

Starting Out

I started the design process with the races and classes. With the exception of humans, I wanted all of the races in *Arcana Unearthed* to be new. It was important to me, however, that *Arcana Unearthed* be a stand-alone book. Not only did all the races and classes have to be balanced, but they had to be complete—they had to fill all the roles that players are going to want to play.

To do this, I tried to step back and say, "What kind of characters do people want to play?" Well, there's the skillful guy, there's the guy who uses magic rather than physical force, and there's the big tough guy with a sword. D&D addresses these roles by providing the rogue, the wizard, and the fighter. (The cleric is interesting, because while necessary to a well-rounded D&D party, the cleric's role is really a combination of the others. His role is "the guy who can heal," which is more specific than I wanted to get at this point.)

D&D also provides variations on the standard roles, and even combines some of them, giving us bards, paladins, rangers, clerics, and so on. You might say, for example, that a bard is the "skillful guy" mixed with the "magic guy." The cleric is the "magic guy" mixed with the "tough guy." The

barbarian is a variation on the "tough guy," and the sorcerer is a variation on the "magic guy."

I know, it sounds like I'm overgeneralizing. That's the point, though. That's where you've got to start.

So I had to create unique ways to fill those roles. I didn't want to create just a rogue with a twist, or a wizard with slightly different spells. I wanted things that really felt different. The way to do that was through specificity. You can't, for example, create a general warrior guy much better than the D&D fighter, so I didn't try. Instead, I created two different "tough guy" classes, one for people who like to play agile, swashbuckling types (the unfettered) and one for those who like to play the "tank" (the warmain). There's also the champion (a warrior with special abilities based on the cause he represents), the oathsworn (a martial artist who overcomes challenges through extreme dedication to his oath), and the totem warrior (a warrior who gains special abilities based on the totem animal he chooses—bear, wolf, snake, hawk, and so on).

For the "magic guy" role, *Arcana Unearthed* has the magister (a staff-wielding mage who is the preeminent spellcaster), the greenbond (a caster tied closely to the forces of life and the land itself), and the runethane (who not only casts spells but creates long-lasting runes with special capabilities). Rounding out the spellcasters is the witch (a caster who also has innate "witchery" powers based on his chosen type of manifestation—blade, storm, fire, and so on) and the mage blade (a magical warrior who uses his sword to cast spells).

For the "skillful guy" role, there's the akashic. Probably the most unique of the *Arcana Unearthed* classes, akashics delve into the collective memory of all things—the "akashic memory"—to gain information and even skills and abilities when they need them. Ask an akashic if he can open locks and his reply might be, after concentrating on the akashic memory for a moment, "I can now."

For the races, I decided that, while the *Player's Handbook* offers Small and Medium characters, it would be interesting for experienced players to take that a step further to explore Tiny and Large races. Thus, I included both the spry and the giant races—Tiny and Large respectively. I knew, however, that balance-wise I couldn't have starting characters who were size Large or were Tiny winged creatures. To deal with that, I created the concept of "racial levels." Most races presented in *Arcana Unearthed* offer the option of taking racial levels rather than standard class levels. A giant can take three levels in "giant," only after which does he grow to be size Large.

Other races include the mysterious psychic verrik, the diminutive faen, the "dragon-scions" known as mojh, the leonine litorians, and the bestial sibeccai.

Empowering the DM

There's at least one other general aspect that I examined from a design perspective while writing *Arcana Unearthed*. When I worked on 3rd Edition, my codesigners and I tried to "take the DM out of the equation" as much as possible. This may have caused its own share of problems, but we did it to make the game as easy as we could for new players. If the DM has to make a lot of judgment calls, the game is more difficult to learn.

However, it's my belief that when the DM has more freedom, the game becomes more satisfying. We can't let ourselves forget that the presence of the DM separates pen-and-paper roleplaying from all other games. With *Arcana Unearthed*, I've intentionally backed away from Third Edition's approach in that regard, just a bit. A certain type of champion, for example, might get a bonus on attack rolls, saves, and checks in all situations pertaining to freeing captives or struggling against an oppressor. Although the book provides guidance on how to judge such situations, it's ultimately up to the DM to decide when the champion gets the bonus.

I've made this decision because *Arcana Unearthed* isn't for new players. It assumes at least a moderate level of experience and maturity. My philosophy is "you don't need me to tell you how to play—I'll just provide some rules and ideas to use and get out of your way."

Feats

From my own experience playing the game as well as feedback from players all over the world, it seems that feats were one of the better ideas in the design of Third Edition. In *Arcana Unearthed*, I really embraced the idea of feats and created two new types. The first is a natural: Called talents, these are feats you are born with, and can take only at 1st level. Talents include Eidetic Memory, Resistance to Poison, Natural Swordsman, and many more.

The other new type of feat is the ceremonial feat. A ceremonial feat can be acquired only after performing a magical ritual. Ceremony feats offer minor supernatural abilities like the ability to alter spells you cast (making them more potent with the Eldritch Training feat, making them more unpredictable with the Wild Mage feat, and so on), improve your combat abilities (Intuitive Sense, which allows you to keep your Dexterity bonus to AC when flat-footed), and so on.

One reason I created ceremony feats was to tie the rules more closely to a flavor-rich setting. While you can ignore it if you want, I like the idea that you can only access certain abilities after performing rites and rituals in a ceremonial center. It ties character advancement to the setting in an interesting way and sets up a new arena for DMs to base adventures and upon which to hang adventure hooks. A DM might, for example, design an adventure around some component of a ceremony a PC needs to gain the feat he wants next level.

Spells

Magic in this variant *Player's Handbook* posed a huge design challenge. I knew that I wanted to ditch the Vancian system (and by that, I mean the idea inspired by Jack Vance's books from the 1960s where one prepares or "memorizes" a spell ahead of time, and then loses the ability to cast it once it is cast). I didn't want to get rid of it because it was bad—in fact, I fought for it to stay in Third Edition when others wanted it gone—but because it was only one way to handle spells. *Arcana Unearthed* exists to show that there are alternative ways of doing things.

At the same time, however, I wanted the spells in *Arcana Unearthed* to be as compatible as possible with existing D&D and d20 spells and spellcasting classes. That meant adhering to the idea of nine spell levels, balanced pretty much the same way (although we'll get to balance issues in a second).

So I came up with a single spell list. There's no division between arcane and divine—those concepts don't come into play—and no separate spell lists for the different classes. A spell is a spell is a spell. Of course, that approach has its own drawbacks. If everyone casts the same spells, the game becomes less interesting. Before I tell you how I dealt with that, let me digress and talk about balance among spells for a minute. It all ties together.

Here's a little secret: Some spells in D&D are unbalanced. I bet you never knew.

Of course you knew that. Every wizard prepares *mage armor*. Everyone knows that *magic missiles* are better than every other 1st-level attack spell. They're better than most 2nd-level spells. *Invisibility* is the king of 2nd-level spells. *Haste* rules over 3rd level. *Harm* is just broken.

So why didn't we fix all that during Third Edition design?

Three reasons:

1. We just plain old made some goofs and oversights. *Harm* is probably in that category.
2. It's impossible to make every 1st-level spell exactly the same in power when you're dealing with such diverse topics as attack spells, summoning spells, spells that make the floor slippery, and so on.
3. The big reason, however, is that to change the spells so drastically would be to change D&D itself in too drastic a way. Every wizard casting *magic missile* is just so... D&D.

But in designing *Arcana Unearthed*, I was free of all the baggage associated with point #3. That freedom allowed me to create virtually all new spells and ditch all the problematic ones (*harm* and *haste* on the overpowered end, for example, and not-so-great legacy spells like *hypnotic pattern* and *animate rope* on the other). And if you're saying, "But I love those spells!" remember there's nothing stopping you from giving your *Arcana Unearthed* mage blade a *hypnotic pattern* spell if you really want.

But what about points #1 and #2? Well, regarding #1, I'm trying my best to avoid goofs, and we've done a lot of playtesting to avoid oversights. As far as #2 goes, I decided to classify every spell as a simple spell, a complex spell, or an exotic spell. All casters have access to simple spells, but only

certain casters have access to complex spells. One gains access to exotic spells only through special feats. This idea allowed me to inject another level of balance—the top-end spells of a given level are complex or exotic, and the lower-end ones are simple spells. This goes back to what I was saying before about variety. Not all casters cast the same spells. In fact, it introduces a new level of campaign flavor. There are spells that one sees commonly—the simple spells. Even one who merely dabbles in magic knows how to cast simple spells. Rarer and stranger are the complex spells: You must be a real devotee of magic to know the secrets of casting them. Exotic spells are far fewer in number and much more scarce. A caster who knows a given exotic spell might be the only mage in the kingdom who knows that particular spell. It might be his “signature spell,” so to speak.

Casting Spells

Casting spells in *Arcana Unearthed* is straightforward. Each class has access to either simple or both simple and complex spells. You have a set number of spells that you can “ready” on a given day, based on your level and an ability score. “Ready” simply means that you’ve got the spell all set to go when you need it. (You don’t lose the readied status of a spell if you cast it. It’s more like how a sorcerer knows certain spells, except that your chosen readied spells can change each day if you wish.) If you can ready four 1st-level spells per day, they can be four different 1st-level spells from day to day—no spellbooks involved. And the numbers of spells you can ready isn’t so small that it forces repetition.

You also have a set number of “slots” each day to cast your spells with. So, if you have three 1st-level slots, you can cast any three of the four 1st-level spells you have prepared, in any combination. You can cast one spell four times, four different spells, two spells twice, or whatever.

Monte Cook’s *Arcana Unearthed*

Monte’s own Malhavoc Press will publish the main *Arcana Unearthed* rulebook and major supplements, with d20 veterans Fiery Dragon Productions and Mystic Eye Games filling in cardboard counter and adventure needs. Here’s a list of what to look for:

MONTÉ COOK’S ARCANA UNEARTHED
(July, Malhavoc Press)

SIEGE ON EBONRING KEEP (ADVENTURE)
(August, Mystic Eye Games)

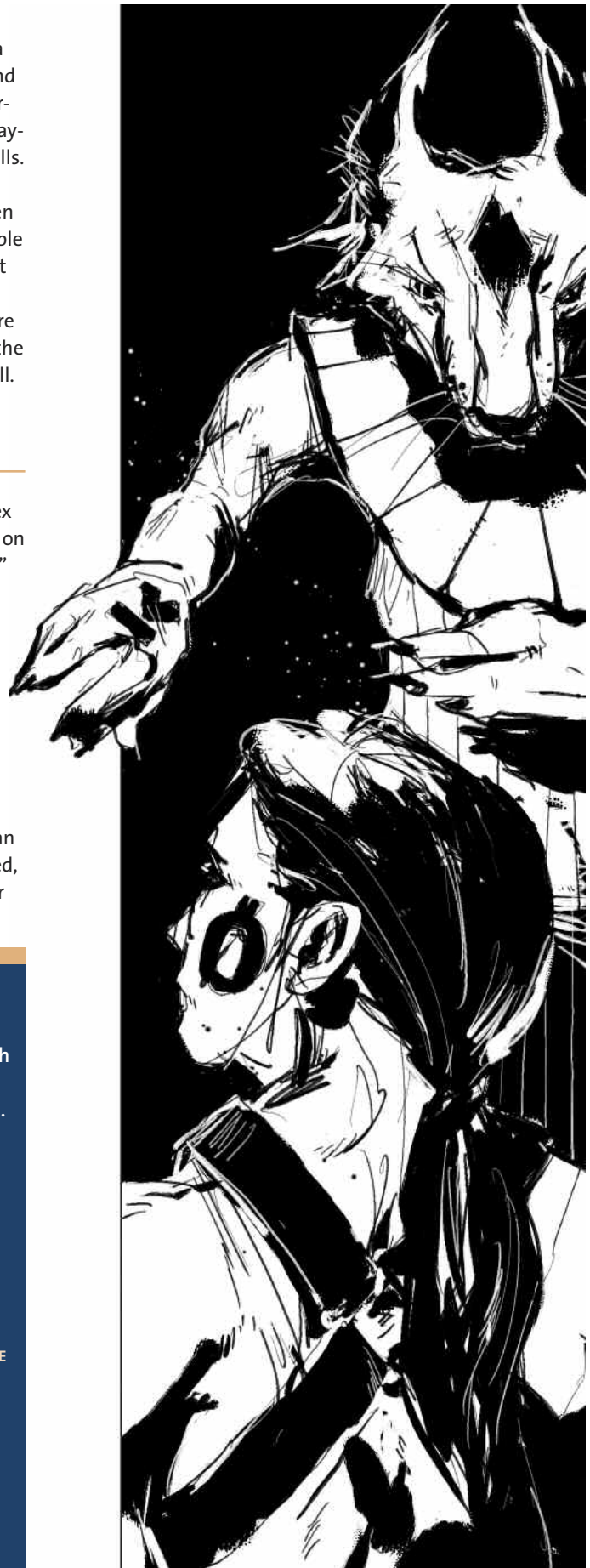
PLAGUE OF DREAMS ADVENTURE
(August, Fiery Dragon Productions)

COUNTER COLLECTION IV: WORLD OF THE DIAMOND THRONE
(August, Fiery Dragon Productions)

DM’S SCREEN AND PLAYER’S GUIDE
(September, Malhavoc Press)

THE DIAMOND THRONE SETTING SOURCEBOOK
(September, Malhavoc Press)

OFFICIAL ARCANA UNEARTHED MINIATURES
(August, Iron Wind Metals)



DAVID HENDEE

This may sound like a combination of the way sorcerers and wizards work, but that's intentional. I wanted to keep it simple and not stray drastically from what people are used to (and keep the spells themselves pretty compatible with regular spells).

But *Arcana Unearthed* spellcasting doesn't stop there. Two really different aspects are:

1. Casters can "weave" multiple lower-level slots to cast higher-level spells, or a single higher-level slot to cast multiple lower-level spells. This adds a great deal of flexibility.

2. Spells have prescribed diminished and heightened effects in their descriptions to tell you what happens if you cast the spell using a slot one level lower or one level higher than the spell itself. This effectively makes every spell into three slightly different spells. For example, one spell animates a melee weapon to attack for you. It attacks as if you're wielding it. The diminished version suffers a -2 penalty to attack rolls and can take only partial actions. The heightened version allows you to use your spellcasting ability score modifier rather than your Strength to determine attack bonus and damage.

I'm proud of this innovation, because it adds a great deal of flavor to each spell and gives casters a lot more choices. You don't have to take a feat to use these diminished or heightened versions. If you've readied the spell, you automatically have any of the three versions readied.

Creating these effects was an interesting endeavor. Some spells have obvious diminished or heightened effects—you just increase or decrease the numbers involved and *voila!* Some, however, were quite challenging: They ended up becoming practically different spells. For example, a new spell called *unknown*, which provides some protection for a character against divinations, can be heightened to protect a small non-mobile area (and all in it) from divinations.

Heightened and diminished effects bring a new dynamic to spellcasting. You might ready a beneficial spell that affects one creature, such as *giant's grip*. You cast it on two of your allies. But when you go to cast it on yourself, you can cast it at one level lower than before, because the diminished version is just like the standard spell with a Personal range. That's cool, because it sets up the logical precedent that it's easier to cast spells on yourself than others. But since it's not actually a lower-level spell, just a diminished version of a spell, you don't get access to the "self-only" version until you get access to the normal version (which helps game balance).

To create these alternative effects in some cases, I just said, "Okay, what would I do if I were trying to create this same spell at one level lower or higher?" In others, particularly the diminished versions, I didn't do that. Instead, I asked myself, "How might someone want to use a spell like this, but in a very diminished capacity?" Take a spell like *control weather*. I could have just reduced the general effects of the spell, but I realized that sometimes, a caster might want just a really small localized thunderstorm or blizzard. So rather than "balancing" it for 6th level, I made the dimin-

ished version a very specialized use of the spell. You won't want to use it most of the time, but sometimes it will come in very handy.

Magic Items

As someone who spent a lot of time working on the *Dungeon Master's Guide*, I can tell you that magic item creation (and in particular, pricing) has always been a tough issue. Devising balanced items without creating an overly complicated system is a challenge. In *Arcana Unearthed*, I streamlined the item creation feats so they fit meaningful magic item categories: Craft One-Use Item, Craft Constant Item, and so on rather than "Brew Potion" or "Forge Ring." Best of all, though, many spells have notes indicating price modifiers that apply when making them into items. One thing that makes item pricing so screwy is that, while you base price on spell level (and caster level), other factors can dictate the power of an item as well. Duration limits the power of some spells, for example. Imagine two spells; one is somewhat better than the other, but the lesser of the two has a longer duration. Those two spells could be balanced at the same spell level. Make them both into permanent magic items, and they cost the same, but in doing so you've lost the balancing factor of duration. Some spells are balanced on utility. For example, in D&D, *consecrate* is the same level as *hold person*, which is probably about right for spells. But as magic items, they don't really have the same inherent value—you're probably going to use your *hold person* item a lot more often than your *consecrate* item.

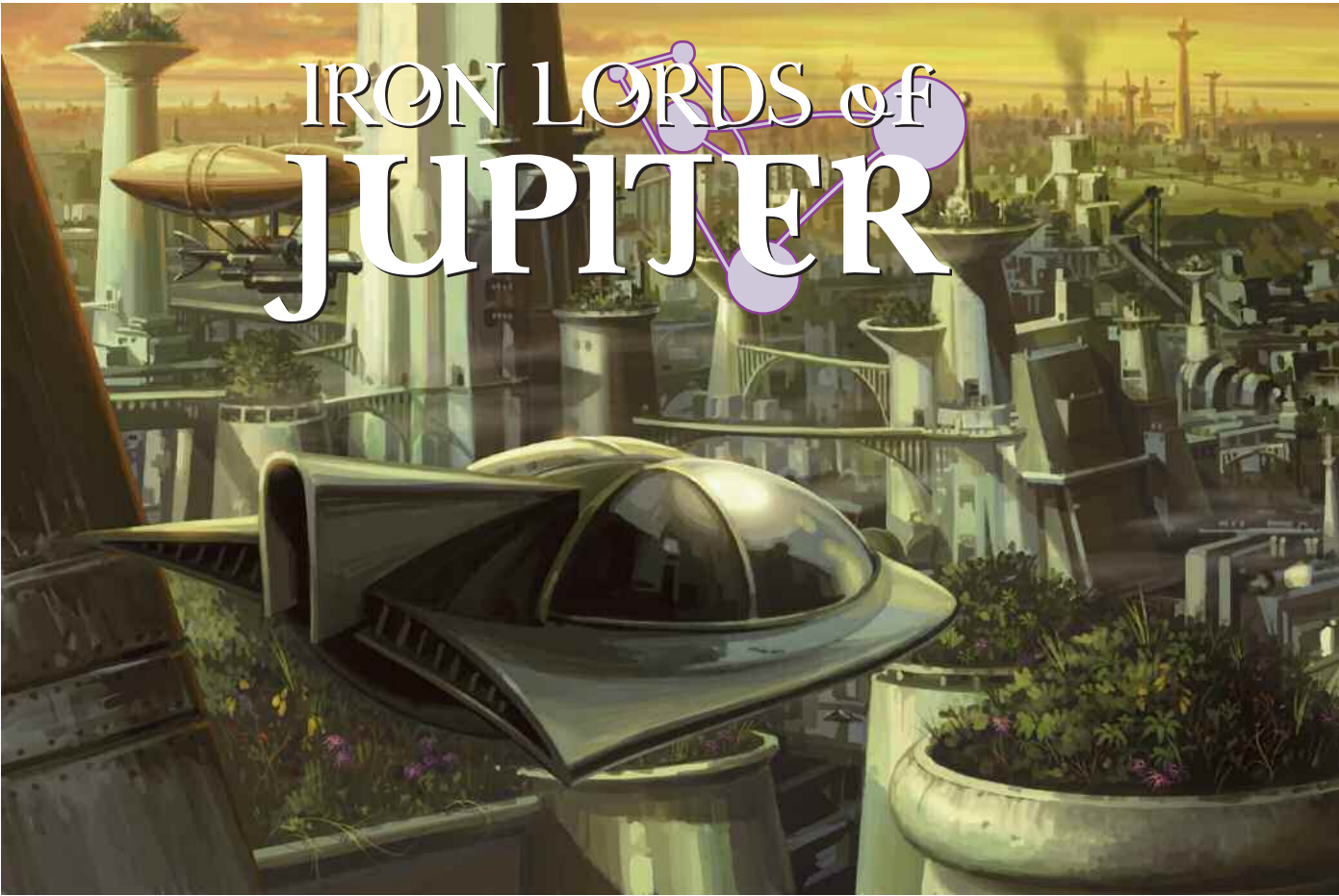
I addressed this problem by giving many spells cost modifiers. Spells balanced by their short duration might cost twice or three times as much when made into a constant item, for example. Some spells are such that you'd only ever want to cast them a couple times. Take an *Arcana Unearthed* spell like *raise the dead* (similar but not exactly the same as *raise dead*), for example. You don't need it often, but when you need it, you really need it. Often, one-use items with such spells seem ridiculously low priced. A spell like this would have a magic item cost modifier when placed in a one-use or spell-completion item (like a scroll).

The Rest

In this brief article I've touched on only a few aspects of *Arcana Unearthed*. I haven't even mentioned combat and skills, for example. These cover mostly familiar territory for D&D players, although I've made a few tweaks. There are some wholly new subsystems as well, including research and memory checks, hero points, alternate spell components, exotic armor (and a new way of dealing with exotic weapons), and more.

Writing a variant player's handbook has been a massive undertaking—a year of development, months of editing, months of playtesting (with dozens of testers), and more than one sleepless night.

In other words, just like working on Third Edition, it's been a lot of fun.



IRON LORDS of JUPITER

A POLYHEDRON MINI-GAME OF PLANETARY ROMANCE

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This POLYHEDRON d20 System Mini-Game requires the *d20 MODERN Roleplaying Game* to play. POLYHEDRON Mini-Games adapt the standard D&D or d20 MODERN rules and conventions to nonstandard settings and genres. Unless specifically noted in the text, this Mini-Game follows the core *d20 MODERN* rules. If you know how to play *d20 MODERN*, you'll pick up the rules of this game in moments.

Iron Lords of Jupiter utilizes game mechanics developed for the new DUNGEONS & DRAGONS game by Jonathan Tweet, Monte Cook, Skip Williams, Richard Baker, and Peter Adkison. and the d20 Modern Roleplaying Game by Bill Slavicek, Jeff Grubb, Rich Redman, and Charles Ryan.

This Wizards of the Coast game contains no Open Game Content.

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BASED ON THE ORIGINAL DUNGEONS & DRAGONS GAME BY GARY GYGAX AND DAVE ARNESON.



I: INTO THE JOVIAN MISTS

CHRISTOPHER TREVAS

The crimson leaves above me rustled abruptly. A scarlet figure dropped down, slashing at me with a blade composed of some dark substance. Without thinking, I returned its attack with the utility knife I had been using on the binding straps, and was rewarded with a gout of azure blood. My attacker squealed and fled back into the scarlet canopy, and it was only a minute later that I realized: The creature had had four arms!

(*Personal Journal of Alicia Vanderveck, July 7, 2092*)

Introduction

Iron Lords of Jupiter is a d20 MODERN Mini-Game in the “planetary romance” tradition of Edgar Rice Burroughs, Jack Vance, and Lin Carter. The game transports modern-day humans to a world of wild adventure, where heroes battle with a ray gun in one hand and a longsword in the other, where lost cities, ancient civilizations, miraculous technologies, and barbaric hordes all await those daring enough to seek them.

The Genre

The “planetary romance” genre began with Edgar Rice Burroughs and *A Princess of Mars*, published in 1912. This novel transported (by sheer willpower alone!) earthman John Carter to Mars, or “Barsoom,” as the natives called it, where he embarked on a series of adventures which pro-

pelled him through twelve novels and which helped define a new genre of science fiction. The *Flash Gordon* comic strips and serials, the *Planet of Adventure* and *Big Planet* novel series by Jack Vance, the *Scorpio* series by Dick Akers, and the *Green Star* novels by Lin Carter all exemplify this genre. The key features of the genre are:

A strange world, seen through the eyes of a visitor from Earth. Almost all novels in the genre have, as their protagonist, an Earthman somehow transported to an alien world. “How” is utterly irrelevant; John Carter simply wished himself to Mars, and others have traveled via everything from rocketship to astral projection. Once there, though, the hero usually cannot return to Earth, and must learn all he can about the new world to carve out a place in it.

No magic. While psionic powers may exist, “magic” as such does not. Any phenomenon, no matter how outré, has some sort of “scientific” explanation (or, sometimes, no explanation at all—it simply is.)

Many races and cultures. Most works in the genre posit a world inhabited by a large number of races, both natives and travelers who came to the world in the distant past. Most are humanoid, albeit with some distinctive feature—red skin, four arms, or wings, for example. Others, especially “evil” races, often resemble classic “bug eyed monsters,” usually combining the worst aspects of insects and squids. Most native societies are feudal in nature.

Lost and ancient. Most of the worlds featured in the genre are very old. Their glory days are long past; outside the few still-thriving cities are wastelands given over to bandits, roaming barbarians, and ruins. Even if the world is thriving, it is still old, and there is much buried, lost, and forgotten treasure waiting for an intrepid band of heroes to discover it.

Romance. It is almost inevitable; you arrive on an alien world, unarmed and naked, and the first thing you do is rescue an attractive member of the opposite sex from some slaving monster, thus establishing for yourself a lifetime career. While the traditional literature tended to feature male heroes perennially saving princesses from an endless series of threats, there is no need to enforce such gender stereotyping in a modern RPG; it is just as proper to have heroic female characters save handsome (but somewhat ineffectual) males as the reverse. Romance, it should be noted, is not sex—despite the near-nudity in which most characters cavort, any dalliances more explicit than a passionate kiss take place far off-stage.



TOM FOWLER

The Setting

While the rules for *Iron Lords of Jupiter* are designed to be flexible enough to allow a Gamemaster to create any planetary romance setting he desires, a sample setting is included to serve as a both a model and as a viable setting for an entire campaign. It is Jupiter, of our solar system, but not the Jupiter scientists think they know. Beneath the roiling gas clouds of the upper atmosphere lies a vast world of oceans and forests, glaciers, and deserts, peopled by exotic races and nightmarish beasts.

But it is a world almost without metals. Despite its massive size, the gravity is close to that of Earth, and a human can survive there unaided. Until recently, the folk of Jupiter made do with exotic woods and stones, building great cities and civilizations without the use of brass, copper, or iron.

A few centuries ago, however, a portentous event changed the world forever. A massive meteorite, possibly a captured moon or an asteroid wandering far off course, slammed into shores of the Cuthalik Ocean. The marikons who first came across it were, at the time, just one of countless races inhabiting the planet, but they saw in the gift from the sky unlimited possibilities. Armed with weapons of steel, they built an empire such as Jupiter had never seen. In two generations, they evolved from farmers and fisherfolk to become the masters of all they surveyed.

The great city of Kuldaar now sprawls along the shores of the Cuthalik Ocean, surrounding and protecting the mining pits where the metal wealth found nowhere else on Jupiter is extracted. From their towers, the Iron Lords look out on their great city, and down upon the servitor races which share it—the brutish groll, famed for great strength and little else, and the artistic veth, once masters of their own empire, now mere servants to another.

Flying craft dot the sky above Kuldaar, powered by gravity-defying *lunth* crystals. Small personal flyers flit here and there, while lumbering iron dreadnoughts, slow and implacable, patrol the skies as a permanent reminder of the might of the Grey Empire.

The horizon is distant, far more distant than it is on Earth, and the Grey Empire's power reaches to it and beyond—but even that vast expanse is just a tiny fraction of Jupiter. There are oceans which could drown the Earth, mountains a dozen miles tall, and forests so dense that no light ever reaches the ground.

Characters can join those few who dare to rebel against the empire, defend cities against madmen and monsters, explore the dark understreets of Kuldaar or battle exotic beasts in the arena, hijack a sky dreadnought and turn it against the palace of the emperor himself, or simply explore the world, treading diamond cliffs and fungal forests in search of glory, wealth, or just a way home.

All of this, and much more, awaits anyone daring enough to make the journey there, and to challenge *The Iron Lords of Jupiter*!

II: CHARACTERS

I had considered myself prepared for anything. I had one degree in Engineering and another in Astrophysics; I had completed my emergency medical training with honors; and I could disassemble and reassemble any one of *Minerva's* systems blind-folded, or so I liked to think. Yet, in the end, the reason I am alive today is that I allowed myself the indulgence of keeping up my hobby of fencing.

(*Personal Journal of Alicia Vanderveck, Oct. 10, 2092*)

Strangers

PCs in an *Iron Lords of Jupiter* campaign come from one of two backgrounds. "Strangers" are (relatively) modern-day humans transported, somehow, to a fantastic world of terrible beauty and high adventure. "Natives" were born to the strange world, and may be from a variety of possible races. Classic planetary romance novels usually focus on a single Stranger, but the dynamics of a roleplaying game might work better with several Strangers, perhaps the crew of a crashed interstellar rocket.

A campaign can be equal parts Native and non-native, or can consist solely of a party of non-natives trying to make their way, perhaps with a single Native ally. Although a wholly Native or wholly Stranger party goes against the spirit of the genre, feel free to try it out if it sounds like it might be fun.

Create Strangers according to the standard *d20 MODERN* rules with the exception of Wealth and Reputation (see below). Starting Stranger characters may choose from any *d20 MODERN* basic class. Traditional planetary romance Strangers often have anachronistic skills that turn out to be surprisingly useful on an alien world. A Fast hero might have Archaic Weapons Proficiency to reflect time in a college fencing club, for instance, while a Strong hero's Handle Animal skill ranks might serve her well when she tries to ride the eight-legged vorts favored by the gentry of Salimar.

The Stranger's native era should influence the character's choice of skills and feats. Since the bulk of planetary romance source material comes from the early to mid-twentieth century, most Strangers come from that era. The sample setting included here involves characters leaving Earth in the mid-twenty-first century, but this can easily be changed.

Consider a group of Strangers from a range of eras. If earthlings come to the alien world via a dimensional rift (see "How Did the Stranger Arrive?" below), the time-space disturbance might pull characters from various times of Earth's history, depositing them in an alien world at approximately the same time. In this way, a Civil War army captain, a World War I flying ace, and a 1990s movie star might find themselves trapped together, cooperation their only hope of survival.

Wealth

The standard *d20 MODERN* Wealth system remains intact in *Iron Lords of Jupiter*. The Wealth bonus for Strangers (as determined by starting occupation), however, is meaningless; John Carter never counted coins or worried about paying the rent. Stranger PCs arrive without access to credit cards or bank accounts, and any money they have on them will be of no real value. GMs can handle this in one of two ways:

- Allow the PCs to "regain" their Wealth bonus after they have earned a level on their new world, justifying this by saying the bonus reflects not just actual wealth, but the ability to earn and manage wealth. Thus, the Entrepreneur who finds himself on Jupiter has no access to his money on Earth, but his flare for knowing what to buy and what to sell serves him well in the marketplaces of Salimar. After he has spent some time learning the basics of Jovian society (reflected by gaining a level), he can acquire a pool of resources to draw upon.

- Eliminate the Wealth bonus due to occupation and grant some other compensating factor—an additional class skill or an additional skill point for each point of Wealth bonus lost.

Reputation

Generally speaking, Strangers arrive on their new world with no Reputation at all; in many cases, they may not even speak a local language! Thus, Reputation should be placed to 0. Any Reputation bonus earned from occupation may be recorded and used for interactions with others from Earth, if they happen to show up. Reputation earned on the new world is handled normally, and is very important to the genre.

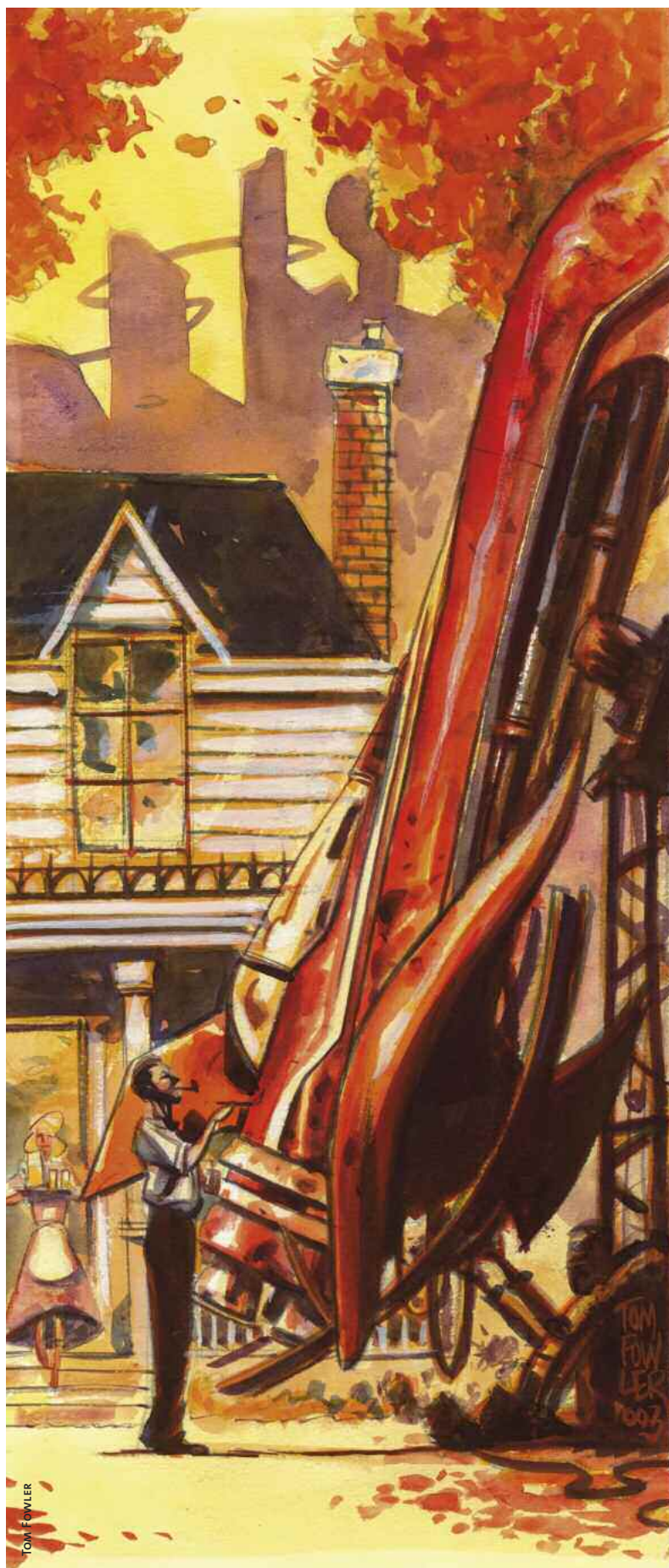
Reserved Skills

At the GM's discretion, Strangers may "reserve" up to one quarter of their starting skill points and one of their starting feats or talents to be taken later in play. This allows the PCs to, for example, learn the native language before gaining a level, or take a feat, such as Armor Proficiency, which they could not reasonably justify learning on Earth. Players may spend these "reserved" skill points or feats at any point prior to gaining second level. Undistributed skill points, feats, and talents not assigned immediately upon achievement of second level are lost forever.

How Did the Stranger Arrive?

Half the fun of setting up an *Iron Lords of Jupiter* campaign is determining how the Strangers got to your campaign world. Some common means include:

Physical Transit: If your tastes skew toward the "realistic," the Strangers may have reached the alien world on a vessel



of some kind. They might be surviving crewmembers or shanghaied alien abductees who managed to survive a crash that killed their mysterious captors. If the Strangers come from the mid-twentieth century, they may have followed the “backyard rocket” tradition, entering space via a craft of their own design. Use a “radical” new propulsion system, an exotic fuel, or similar pseudoscience to justify the fantastic journey. If it was good enough for Flash Gordon, it’s probably good enough for your player characters.

Dimensional Rift: Some exotic technology, either from Earth or another world, opens a “portal” between the worlds, and the Strangers pass through it. Someone at the “other end” may have deliberately opened the gateway to lure the PCs to their world, the Strangers may have entered intentionally, assuaging an explorer’s spirit, or the whole thing may have been a terrible accident. The DC Comics character Adam Strange is a good example of a planetary romance character who comes to his world accidentally, zapped to the fantastic planet of Rann when struck by a random Zeta Beam.

It Just “Is”: John Carter, the genre’s most archtypal protagonist, simply looked at Mars, felt an odd attraction, and found himself standing on the Red Planet, naked. Lin Carter’s *Green Star* protagonist uses astral projection to take over the body of a dead hero. If the GM wishes to toss out the “whys” and “wherefores,” he can simply announce to the PCs that they find themselves on a new world. Ideally, there should be some triggering event—an explosion, a plane crash, a tornado—but ultimately, the end result is that the PCs arrive on the new world with no idea how they got there and must make quick decisions to stay alive in their new home.

Natives

Native PCs differ from the *d20 MODERN* standard, in large part because their world is not modern, but a blend of the archaic and the futuristic. Modes of transit may include riding beasts and aerial ships, but generally won’t include automobiles or skateboards.

Race: In the default *d20 MODERN* setting, the only race available to PCs is “human.” *Iron Lords of Jupiter* offers players of Native characters many additional race options, as detailed below.

Groll

Nasty, brutish, and not very short, most groll live as either barbarians or slaves. A few, however, have found other outlets for their talents. Spread across Jupiter, the groll inhabit a wide range of environments. In large numbers, they can be a threat to more sedate races, but for the most part they are content to wander and be left alone.

Personality: Groll are quick to anger and quick to forgive. They prefer the simplest things in life—a good fight, good drink, and the freedom of the open plains. They rarely forget a debt owed, either to them or by them. Their mercurial emotions cause others to consider them dangerous and unpredictable, but those who have studied their culture find their actions are guided by a deep and complex set of rules and traditions, which most folk simply don't bother to learn or understand. They aren't deep thinkers, but they're not stupid, and assuming otherwise is often the last mistake their enemies make.

Physical Description: Groll are roughly humanoid in form, but only roughly so, being taller and considerably broader than the average human. Their short, powerful arms end in two meaty fingers and a thumb, and their stubby legs bear two wide toes.

Groll skin tone is a uniform gray across the species, with dark brown patches providing color distinction between individuals.

A groll's most alien aspect, however, is its face, or lack thereof. Two wide, dull black vertically stacked glassy eyes stare ahead from their perch above a simple mouth, no more than a fleshy gap that can be opened to the size of a spacer's helmet or closed tightly into an almost invisible slit. Although groll lack even the vestigial ears of the veth, their senses are the equal of any human's.

Culture: Groll have a Barbarous culture. Most groll live a nomadic lifestyle, wandering the vast uninhabited regions of Jupiter, occasionally taking refuge for a few weeks at one of the countless abandoned cities that litter the giant planet.

While distinct groll bands number in the thousands, each with subtly different cultural variations, most follow a simple pattern of selecting a leader based on the virtue of pure might, who rules until someone else manages to defeat him in (usually) nonlethal combat. Control of a groll band might shift many times over the course of a few months.

The groll's nomadic lifestyle is incompatible with the strict control imposed by the Iron Lords, who nonetheless put the creatures' enormous strength to good use throughout the Grey Empire, where all groll are considered slaves. The marikon press groll into work gangs, force them to compete in gladiatorial conflicts, or use the creatures as personal servants. Escaped groll must either flee to the borderlands of the empire or take up a criminal lifestyle, often in the role of thug or enforcer.

Names: Groll have two names, a "secret" name they tell only to their closest friends and an "open" name, which is both descriptive and ever-changing. A groll might call himself "Morthag-Slayer" after he has killed such a beast. Some months later, he might rename himself "Fish-Finder" after locating a lake rich in food at a time when his tribe was hungry, then "Twin-Father" when his mate gives birth to twins.

A groll discovers his secret name, usually a short, simple sound that means both nothing and everything to him, in adolescence.

Typical Groll names (for both genders) include: Bone-Breaker,

Finder-of-Trails, Knife-Crafter, Shaper-of-Stones, Son-of-River-Walker, and Leaping-Dancer.

Adventurers: Because of their large size and immense strength, many of Jupiter's inhabitants forget that the groll are as clever as any other race. Groll who break free from their bonds often work to free others, or seek ways to escape the domain of the Iron Lords and return to a nomadic lifestyle. Those few who learn to enjoy the comforts of civilization often seek employment as guards, soldiers, or laborers.

Groll Racial Traits

Groll are Native characters, and must obey all the rules regarding Native PCs.

Size: Medium. Groll have no special bonuses or penalties due to their size.

Ability Modifiers: +2 Strength, +2 Constitution, -2 Dexterity, -2 Charisma. Groll are heavily muscled and hardy, but slow-moving, clumsy, and have difficulty relating to others.

Base Speed: 20 ft.

Nonhuman: Groll receive one fewer feat at first level, four fewer skill points at first level, and 1 fewer skill point at second and higher levels.

Skills: All groll have Survival as a class skill.

Thick Skinned: Due to their hardy flesh, groll gain DR 1/-.

Hardy: Groll can survive in nearly any environment; they gain a +1 racial bonus on checks made to resist normal environmental effects such as natural heat and cold (but not fire- or cold-based attacks).

Marikon (Iron Lords)

Shifting from a race of relatively peaceful fishers and artisans to the masters of a vast empire in a few generations, the marikon (more commonly known as the Iron Lords of Jupiter) are the most prominent species in the region of the Eastern Cuthalik Ocean, which forms the geographic base of most *Iron Lords of Jupiter* campaigns.

Personality: Most marikon, even those not of the ruling class, are arrogant and impatient. They believe they were given a destiny to rule Jupiter, and this belief colors everything they do. Even those few marikon who disagree with the policies of the Grey Empire tend toward imperiousness—if they join a group of rebels, they'll expect to be in charge. Almost every marikon seeks to assert rulership at some point—a building manager will bully the cleaner, the cleaner will bully his assistant, his assistant will bully a non-marikon slave. Every marikon is convinced of his own importance, and makes sure that others know of it.

Physical Appearance: Marikon are humanoids, of average height and build. Their brilliant crimson skin secretes oils that give them a glistening sheen. A thin crest of dark black hair reaches from the bridge of a marikon's nose to the nape of its neck; the fringe itself is never more than an inch or two wide, but the hair can grow very long, and upper-class marikon spend a great deal of time shaping and decorating it. A skilled observer can tell the social status, political affiliations, and family members of a marikon just by studying the style and decorations of its hair.

The most striking difference between marikon and

humans, however, are “outcroppings,” distinctive spurs of bone that jut out at a marikon’s elbows, shoulders, and knees. Marikon with a bent for combat further hone the naturally sharp bone; some marikon even fit special blades and points onto their outcroppings (see Chapter 4).

Marikon fingers and toes do not end in nails, but in similar bone spurs, which grow constantly and must be kept trimmed, usually by grinding them on sandstone blocks designed for just that purpose.

Marikon are mammals, and bear live young. They reproduce fairly slowly, having about one child every 2–3 years at the most. Twins are extremely rare—less than one birth in ten thousand—and triplets are things of legend. The average marikon female can produce 3–4 children in her lifetime.

Culture: Most marikon have a Civilized culture. For the marikon, everything changed when the sky fell. Long ago, a section of Jupiter’s sky grew exceptionally bright. As pastoral marikon below watched, it glowed brighter and brighter, as if something were heating it. Then, a piece of it tore loose, with the rest of the sky healing around it. The piece of sky fell into the shores of the Cuthalik Ocean, and the marikon were the first to find and understand the sky fragments. They turned the orange rock into a grey metal. With that metal, they forged an empire.

The marikon became convinced they had a Destiny, that they were Chosen. After all, the surface of the world was so large that the odds of the Fallen Sky landing near them due to nothing but sheer chance were preposterously small, so the hand of some higher power must have guided it. The metals of the Fallen Sky were the key to empire, and so that must be the purpose of the marikon—to place the entire world under one rule, to bring order and peace to a factious Jupiter.

This sense of purpose has faded in the past generation. The larger the empire grew, the more slowly it expanded, and the markion’s relatively slow breeding rate likewise hindered their expansion. Non-markion now nearly outnumber the Iron Lords in their capital city of Kuldaar, and this balance is likely to shift further against the markion

in years to come. Many younger markion now press for holding and developing their present lands rather than imperial expansion. They disdain calls for service and wish to enjoy the empire built by their forefathers.

The Iron Lords prefer direct, functional art and engineering, eschewing fripperies or placing aesthetics above utility. Thus everything from their personal weapons to the great city of Kuldaar bespeaks a raw functionality; decorations and embellishments are rare.

Marikon prefer entertainment to art, favoring arena sports or plays (often violent dramas or low comedies). Marikon love to dance, funneling most of their creative energy into elaborately choreographed movements. Dance serves as the focal point of many social events, and the marikon martial arts are often known as war dances.

The marikon emperor putatively governs the whole of the empire, with day-to-day business carried out by a cadre of marikon known as the Seated Lords. In reality, the Seated Lords wield all real power; the emperor is a figurehead ruler kept rich and pampered, allowed to indulge all manner of personal whims, provided they don’t interfere with the business of running the empire. It has been thus for many generations, so Kuldaar is filled with odd buildings and architectural features that were the result of Imperial Decree, and unusual laws and edicts litter the Scrolls of Order.

The current emperor is Overlord Joliz the Third, sometimes quietly called Overlord Joliz the Vain. The Seated Lords eagerly support his love of his own image and his demands that artists of all races from around the empire depict him, because his younger brother, Second Heir Mordal, is a much wiser and far more ambitious man. Should Mordal ascend to the Grey Throne, the long “understanding” of the true nature of power in the empire may change.

Names: Marikon prefer names that reveal who they are and why they should be listened to, combined with a family name that bespeaks their heritage.

Typical marikon names (males and females share naming conventions) are First Overseer Torgan,

Determining Height and Weight

Choose your character’s height and weight or roll randomly on the table below. The dice roll given in the Height Modifier column determines the character’s extra height beyond the base height. That same number multiplied by the dice roll given in the Weight Modifier column determines the character’s extra weight beyond the base weight.

Race	Base Height	Height Modifier	Base Weight	Weight Modifier
Human, man	4’10”	+2d10	120 lb.	× (2d4) lb.
Human, woman	4’5”	+2d10	85 lb.	× (2d4) lb.
Groll, man	5’	+2d10	200 lb.	× (3d4) lb.
Groll, woman	5’	+2d10	400 lb.	× (3d4) lb.
Marikon, man	4’10”	+2d10	120 lb.	× (2d4) lb.
Marikon, woman	4’5”	+2d10	85 lb.	× (2d4) lb.
Veth, man	5’	+2d10	100	× (1d4) lb.
Veth, woman	4’8”	+2d10	70	× (1d4) lb.



CHRISTOPHER TREVAS

Commander of the Sixth Legion Merik, Assistant Tile Cleanser Dormag, and Third-Rank Weaponcrafter Grandar.

Adventurers: Marikon may become adventurers for many reasons. Some disagree with the actions of the Grey Empire and secretly work to bring it down. Others seek wealth, power, and status beyond the rigid bounds of imperial law. Others are criminals fleeing punishment; their crimes might be cruel and vicious, or they might be “crimes” only in the eyes of the empire—aiding a slave who was being beaten, for example, or loudly decrying imperial policy.

In the sample setting, marikon are intended primarily as antagonists. If marikon are to be used as PCs, it is recommended that there be no more than one per party, and that the character be a rebel or an outlaw.

Marikon Racial Traits

Marikon are Natives, and must obey all rules regarding Native PCs.

Size: Medium. Marikon have no special bonuses or penalties due to their size.

Ability Modifiers: +2 Charisma, -2 Wisdom. Marikon are filled with the self-confidence that comes from knowing from birth that their species is master of all it surveys. Unfortunately, this also makes them overconfident and unperceptive.

Base Speed: 30 feet.

Nonhuman: Marikon receive one fewer feat at first level, four fewer skill points at first level, and 1 fewer skill point at second and higher levels.

Bonus Feat: All marikon gain the Metalworking feat at first level.

Outcroppings: Marikon have bony spurs on their elbow joints and bone “claws” on their hands, allowing them to deal normal (instead of nonlethal) damage in melee combat.

Wealth Bonus: +1. The relatively small marikon population has control over the wealth of a great empire.

Veth

The veth are a humanoid race, very similar in appearance to terrestrial humans save for their blue skin and almost non-existent ears. The veth are one of many humanoid races who dwell in the area controlled by the Iron Lords; their peaceful, artistic civilization was absorbed into the Grey Empire with very little resistance, and theirs is considered one of the least threatening of the vassal states.

Personality: Veth are patient, sensitive, artistic, and refined—usually. An ancient race, they long ago managed to provide themselves with the necessities of life, leaving much time for contemplation. The takeover of their last great city, Salimar, by the empire has been met with mild confusion and distress by the elder veth, but seems to have kindled something in the younger ones, reigniting a fire which has been smoldering, almost extinguished, for many generations. Rebellion, both overt and subtle, has flared, and younger veth are becoming more inclined to fight than submit, more prone to action than to thought.

Physical Description: Veth skin ranges from pale to deep blue. Their metallic irises literally sparkle, ranging in hue from copper red to golden yellow. Veth hair ranges from dark black to pale blonde, following the usual range of human colors, but tends to begin much further back on the scalp than human hair does.

Veth have extremely underdeveloped ears, with just a slight fold of skin surrounding the ear passage. Generally much thinner than humans, veth weigh even less than their slight builds suggest.

Culture: Veth have a Decadent culture. Their large empire fell apart well before the rise of the Iron Lords, and their current territory contains only a few large cities and the surrounding farmland. Centuries-old biotechnology insures a rapidly-growing and pest-free crop, so most veth spend their considerable free time in the pursuit of art. Veth art is subtle, intricate, and, to most observers, dull; a typical veth may spend a year placing rocks into a pattern on a bed of sand. Those few who produce work with more visceral appeal are often transported to the marikon city of Kuldaar, where their work amuses the overlords of the Grey Empire.

Names: Veth names are soft and liquid. Most contain many levels of meaning, as determined by the choice of characters used to write them—the same syllables can mean radically different things when written down in the complex veth language, so it is often as important to understand how someone spells their name as how they pronounce it.

Typical male veth names are Ylmin, Lithin, Mellorin, Nalmalin, and Jylman.

Typical female veth names are Arlla, Ordral, Nallio, Athalli, and Nolli.

Adventurers: Most veth are languidly content, resigned to their position as thralls of the Iron Lords. A few, mostly the younger, are not. Some have learned of the ancient Veth Expanses, when the veth ruled great reaches of land, and seek to reclaim those glory days. Others have been inspired by the dynamism shown by the strange visitors from a distant world, and have found a purpose in life beyond delicate refinement.

White Veth: Perhaps one in one thousand veth is born an albino. Veth consider albinism a mark of both distinction and fear, for white veth possess strange powers, though not all train fully in their use. The condition is not hereditary, but seems to be random; a white veth may be born to any veth family. Such children are usually kept hidden away—servants of the Grey Empire hunt out white veth, enslaving them for the amusement of the Iron Lords.

Veth Racial Traits

Veth are Natives, and must obey all rules regarding Native PCs.

Size: Medium. Veth have no special bonuses or penalties due to their size.

Ability Modifiers: +2 Dexterity, –2 Strength. Veth are agile but fine-boned, and veth warriors prefer light weapons and armor, sacrificing power for mobility.

Base Speed: 30 feet.

Nonhuman: Veth receive one fewer feat at first level, four fewer skill points at first level, and 1 fewer skill point at second and higher levels.

Long-Lived: Veth live longer than humans; a veth is considered an adult at 25, and usually lives to be 150.

Skills: All veth have either Craft (visual art) or Perform as a class skill. Select one at character creation.

Defense: Veth are exceptionally agile, and receive a +1 racial bonus to Defense.

White Veth Racial Traits

As for veth, except as follows:

Ability Scores: –2 to Constitution. White veth are frail and often in ill health.

Bonus Feat: White veth gain the Wild Talent feat at first level.

Occupations and Societies

Very roughly, societies of an alien world can be divided into Civilized, Decadent, and Barbarous.

Civilized societies are those which dwell in actively maintained cities and continue to expand their knowledge and influence.

Decadent societies are composed of city-dwellers whose time has passed. Their great structures crumble under the slow assault of time, their knowledge fading with each generation. Most inhabitants of a Decadent society seek only to be left alone.

Barbarous societies consist of nomads, raiders, farmers, or scavengers who produce little, taking and finding what they need.

Certain starting occupations (*d20 MODERN*, p. 32) make sense for some society types and not for others. Consult the following lists to determine available starting occupations for members of the three society types:

Civilized: Academic, adventurer, creative, criminal, entrepreneur, military, student, technician.

Decadent: Adventurer, athlete, creative, dilettante, law enforcement.

Barbaric: Adventurer, athlete, military, religious, rural.

Skills And Feats

Iron Lords of Jupiter uses the most of the skills presented in the *d20 MODERN Roleplaying Game*. Due to the bizarre nature of planetary romance worlds, and Jupiter in particular, a number of skills require additional rules or minor alterations, as explained below. Any unlisted skill can be used unchanged.

Computer Use

This skill does not exist in the sample setting. Other planetary romance settings might include “electric brains” or “calculatrons,” which can be used with this skill. Such machines are generally bulky, centralized, and have anachronistic capabilities. Robots might exist in some planetary romance settings, but to be true to the source material such artificial men should possess awkward early sci-fi features such as telescoping arms and plenty of lightbulbs.

Craft

Use of Craft (electronic) is somewhat limited on Jupiter, as only the city of Kuldaar really has electronics. Even there, the technology incorporates materials and techniques which are unknown on Earth, and Strangers suffer a -2 competence penalty on Craft (electronic) checks until they have had enough experience with the equipment to compensate. Other Craft skills work as specified in *d20 MODERN*, although the precise techniques used are different. A native PC with Craft (pharmaceutical), for example, knows how to blend native plants into potent medicines, while a character with Craft (chemical) has knowledge only of native poisons and explosives, which may differ considerably from their counterparts on Earth.

Characters in an *Iron Lords of Jupiter* campaign have two additional Craft skill categories: Craft (crystal) and Craft (woodworking).

Since metal as a rule does not exist on Jupiter, Native characters suffer a -4 circumstance penalty to Craft checks related to metalworking.

Craft (crystal) (Int)

Exotic energy-emitting crystals power much of Jupiter's technology. Two of the most important crystals are the *lunth* and *kivas*.

Lunth crystals grant vehicles the power of flight. Carving and setting the the crystals into the settings required to take advantage of their power is a delicate art. Sample Craft DCs are:

Task	DC
Realign crystals	12
Carve small crystal	20
Carve medium crystal	25
Carve large crystal	30

Kivas crystals emit powerful and coherent bursts of force, and are the basis for Jovian "ray guns." Sample Craft DCs are:

Task	DC
Evaluate crystal	10
Set crystal	15
Carve crystal	20
Improve crystal	25*

*A *kivas* crystal can be altered to increase its utility as a weapon. Such alterations include: Increasing total charges by 1, increasing damage 1, and increasing range increment by 10 feet

Each such alteration increases the DC of further alterations by 5. Failure when altering a *kivas* crystal results in an explosion which does 4d6 points of damage to all within 10 feet (DC 25 Reflex save for half damage).

Craft (woodworking) (Int)

Woodworking on Jupiter is much more than a simple handicraft. Without much metal, weapons and tools must be shaped from *telgir*, a type of wood which hardens to an almost bronze-like consistency when suitably treated. Shaping and processing *telgir* is thus a vital skill.

Task	DC
Carve raw <i>telgir</i>	10
Harden <i>telgir</i>	15
Shape hardened <i>telgir</i>	20

Demolitions

Explosives generally play a minimal role in planetary romance source material, and hence should be extremely rare in an *Iron Lords of Jupiter* campaign. If potent explosives (such as *jirathite*, p. 41) exist, so does this skill. Otherwise, feel free to ignore it. Even if the campaign setting features explosives, they generally are too primitive to be disarmed or timed more accurately than to within a minute.

Drive

Motor vehicles, as such, rarely exist in the genre; most land transit is by riding beast or flying vehicle. Thus, the Drive skill generally does not exist.

Investigate

Modern crime-solving techniques are generally not known to Natives.

Knowledge

Most Knowledge sub-categories presented in *d20 MODERN* are appropriate, but focus on the lore of the campaign world rather than the lore of Earth. There's enough overlap that Knowledge skills acquired on Earth will not be penalized on an alien world, although the characters may need to overcome a few preconceptions.

"My biology classes had taught me that man-sized insects, such as the one which had just attacked me, simply could not exist. The bleeding gash in my arm offered a dissenting point of view. I chose to heed my arm."

(*Personal Journal of Alicia Vanderveck, Aug 12, 2093*)

Pilot

The version of this skill known to Natives applies to personal anti-gravity craft rather than fixed-wing aircraft.

Research

This skill is available only to native PCs from highly-civilized cultures which maintain repositories of knowledge. (See Occupations and Societies, above.)

Feats

Strangers follow the standard feat rules as outlined in the *d20 MODERN Roleplaying Game*. Some *d20 MODERN* feats require additional rules or information when applied to a Native character, as outlined below. Unlisted feats remain unchanged.

Advanced Firearms Proficiency

Autofire weapons do not exist on Jupiter; this feat is unavailable to Native characters at character creation, and can be gained only if the character has been trained by a another character with the feat and the appropriate weaponry with which to demonstrate.

Aircraft Operation

Choose from the following aircraft classes: ornithopters, sky barges, and gliders.

Burst Fire

See Advanced Firearms Proficiency, above.

Double Tap

See Advanced Firearms Proficiency, above.

Exotic Firearms Proficiency

All of the ranged energy weapons noted in the Chapter Five are considered “exotic” in the sample setting. Each time a character selects this feat, he gains proficiency with one of them.

Force Stop

Since modern surface vehicles do not exist in the default setting, this feat is moot.

Gearhead

Jupiter has no computers, so this feat applies instead to Disable Device and Repair checks.

Personal Firearms Proficiency

All firearms (energy weapons) are considered exotic, and require Exotic Firearms Proficiency. This feat does not exist.

Optionally, A GM may allow it for characters whose background logically includes gun skill. If this is done, players with this proficiency should be allowed to bring an Earth-type gun with them. Providing a supply of bullets for said gun should be difficult.

Skip Shot

This feat works with energy weapons.

Strafe

This feat does not exist.

Surface Vehicle Operation

Sailboats and muscle-powered craft (rowboats, war galleys) are the only surface vehicles which exist on Jupiter. This feat has no prerequisite.

New Feats

This section introduces several new feats. Some apply only to the sample setting; others are of use in any example of the genre. Feats marked [Native] are available only to characters who are natives of the game world. Feats marked [Stranger] are available only to those not of the game world.

Away With You!

You can bypass lesser foes to attack a greater enemy.

Benefit: When in combat against several enemies, you may spend an action point and designate one foe as your “fitting opponent.” If the enemies have multiple CRs, the fitting opponent must be the foe with the highest CR.

Only one foe per combat session may be so designated; if the fitting opponent is slain, you cannot use this feat again until the next combat. The feat may not be used more than once per day, in any event.

When used, you gain a +4 dodge bonus to Defense when avoiding attacks of opportunity caused by moving toward the fitting opponent. This bonus applies only if the character intends to engage said foe in melee combat. This is a highly cinematic feat, and may not be appropriate for darker games.

Exotic Technique [Stranger]

Your odd style with melee weapons confuses Native opponents.

Prerequisite: Archaic Weapons Proficiency.

Benefit: When in combat with a Native, you may spend an action point in an attempt to use Terran fighting styles to confuse an opponent trained in a different style. Roll 1d6. On a roll of 1–5, your style confuses your opponent, and you gain a +1 competence bonus to hit against that opponent for the duration of combat. On a roll of 6, however, your style proves inadequate to defend against the opponent’s attacks, and you suffer a –2 penalty to Defense against that opponent for the duration of combat.

Special: This feat may be taken only at first level.

“His skill in the tuth-tal style of the veth was much greater than my own, and he quickly drove me back, toward the morthag pit. Then I realized that my months of training with the veth fighting masters had nearly caused me to overlook the obvious answer! I shifted to a classic fencing pose and parried his blow, then issued a riposte of my own. Startled, he drew back, and I moved away from the edge of the pit, a thin smile forming on my lips.”
(*Journal of Alicia Vanderveck, Sept 1, 2093*)

Lover's Fury

You are especially deadly when someone you love is in danger.

Benefit: If you are in combat, and someone you love is clearly threatened (in a square which an enemy threatens, exposed to ranged weapons fire, at –1 or fewer hit

points, or the like), you gain a +1 morale bonus on all attack and damage rolls. However, you cannot withdraw from combat so long as your love is threatened. You may only have one “love” at a time, and the relationship must be approved by the GM.

Metalworking

You are trained in working metal.

Benefit: In the *Iron Lords of Jupiter* setting, metal is extremely rare, so that most craftsmen never learn to use it properly. With this feat, you may use your Craft skills without incurring a -4 penalty.

Special: This feat is intended only for the sample setting.

Strange Memories [Stranger]

You have odd flashes of knowledge about your new world.

Benefit: Despite having never been here before, you sometimes feel that this is your true home. Perhaps you lived here in a former life, or perhaps you have somehow been touched by this place. Whatever the cause, once per day, you may make a DC 12 Intelligence check to “remember” or “know” some useful fact about the world that you would otherwise not know (within reason).

For example, you might recognize that the writing on the wall of the ruined city indicates it was built by the Green Crawlers, but you would probably not know the layout of the Path Of Twelve Deaths which lies at the heart of that city.

Special: You may not Take 10 or 20 on this check. The memories are not under your control; they bubble up from your subconscious at random.

Tenuous Grip

You know how to avoid a nasty fall.

Benefit: If you fail a Jump check while leaping across a pit, or a Balance check while on a narrow precipice, are bull rushed over a cliff, or find yourself in any other situation where the consequences of a failed check would result in you taking falling damage, you may spend an action point to make a DC 15 Reflex save to grab hold of *something*—the edge of the pit, a jut of stone, the decorative rim of the air-car you were just shoved out of—and hang on. You can do nothing else while dangling except try to pull yourself up; this is a DC 15 Strength check if you have light or medium encumbrance, a DC 20 Strength check if you have heavy encumbrance. Failing the check means you hang there one more round (perhaps allowing an ally to help you up). Failing by more than ten means your grip slips and you plummet to certain doom.

Vehicle Leap

You are skilled at leaping from or onto a moving vehicle.

Benefit: By spending an action point, you may successfully jump from one moving vehicle to another, provided the target vehicle is within your jumping range. You also may jump from a stationary point onto a moving vehicle by spending an action point, but you must make a DC 15 Reflex save to avoid suffering damage. If you fail the save, you suffer damage as if you had been struck by the vehicle.



III: CLASSES

The unusual setting of an *Iron Lords of Jupiter* campaign requires certain adjustments to the advanced classes presented in the *d20 MODERN Roleplaying Game*. Unlisted advanced classes do not appear in a planetary romance campaign.

Note that bonus feats granted by advanced classes cannot grant feats that do not exist in the genre (see Chapter 2), even if those feats appear on the bonus feat list in the *d20 MODERN Roleplaying Game*.

Soldier

The Soldier advanced class becomes the Warrior, making the following changes:

Requirements: Replace Personal Firearms Proficiency with Archaic Weapons Proficiency.

Class Skills: Demolitions is not a class skill.

Bonus Feats: Advanced Firearms Proficiency and Exotic Firearms Proficiency are of limited use in a world without firearms.

Martial Artist

This class may be used unmodified.

Daredevil

Modify this class as follows:

Class Skills: Replace Demolitions with Handle Animal.

Bonus Feats: Add Tenuous Grip and Vehicle Leap.

Bodyguard

Modify this class as follows:

Requirements: Replace Personal Firearms Proficiency with Archaic Weapons Proficiency.

Bonus Feats: Add Lover's Fury and Vehicle Leap.

Infiltrator

This class may be used unmodified.

New Advanced Classes

This section introduces new advanced classes suitable for any planetary romance campaign, including new twists

on standard *d20 MODERN* advanced classes like the Gunslinger, Field Medic, and Field Scientist.

Bowmaster

The Bowmaster rules ranged combat in an *Iron Lords of Jupiter* campaign. She can fire arrows with unearthly (or unjovian) speed, and excels at hitting her intended target. She can shoot through an inch-wide hole while riding past it on a fast vort, or pin an arrogant Iron Lord to the wall by his robes without shedding a drop of blood.

Select this advanced class if you wish to be expert in the use of the bow.

The fastest path to this class is from the Fast hero basic class.

Requirements

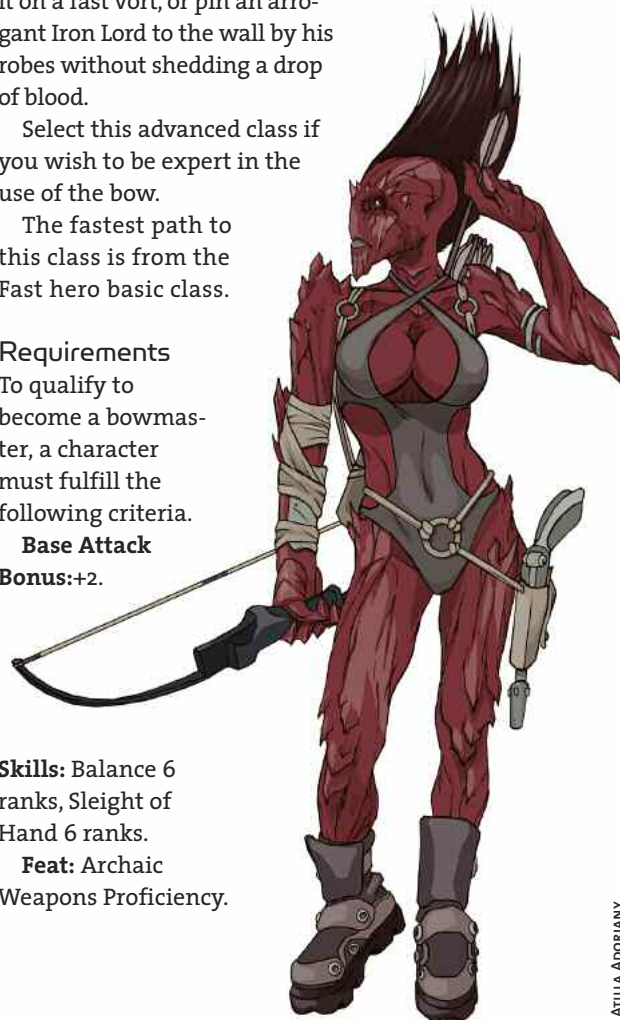
To qualify to become a bowmaster, a character must fulfill the following criteria.

Base Attack

Bonus:+2.

Skills: Balance 6 ranks, Sleight of Hand 6 ranks.

Feat: Archaic Weapons Proficiency.



ARTILLA ADORJANY

Table 3-1: The Bowmaster

Class Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special	Defense Bonus	Reputation Bonus
1	+0	+0	+1	+1	Close combat shot	+1	+0
2	+1	+0	+2	+2	Weapon focus	+1	+0
3	+2	+1	+2	+2	Bonus feat	+2	+1
4	+3	+1	+2	+2	Double shot	+2	+1
5	+3	+1	+3	+3	Trick shot	+3	+1
6	+4	+2	+3	+3	Bonus feat	+3	+2
7	+5	+2	+4	+4	Sharp shooting	+4	+2
8	+6	+2	+4	+4	Greater weapon focus	+4	+2
9	+6	+3	+4	+4	Bonus feat	+5	+3
10	+7	+3	+5	+5	Bullseye	+5	+3

Class Information

The following information pertains to the Bowmaster advanced class.

Hit Die: d10.

Action Points: 6 + one-half character level, rounded down.

Class Skills: The Bowmaster's class skills are as follows: Balance (Dex), Climb (Str), Concentration (Con), Craft (Int), Handle Animal (Cha), Intimidate (Cha), Jump (Str), Knowledge (current events) (Int), Move Silently (Dex), Read/Write Language (none), Ride (Dex), Sleight of Hand (Dex), Speak Language (none), Survival (Wis), Tumble (Dex).

Skill Points at Each Level: 5 + Int modifier.

Class Features

The following features pertain to the Bowmaster advanced class.

Close Combat Shot

At 1st level, a Bowmaster gains the ability to make a ranged attack with a bow while in a threatened area without provoking an attack of opportunity.

Weapon Focus

At 2nd level, a Bowmaster gains the benefits of the Weapon Focus feat with a specific type of bow (short bow, crossbow, etc.).

Bonus Feats

At 3rd, 6th, and 9th level, the Bowmaster may select a bonus feat from the following list. The Bowmaster must meet all the prerequisites of the feat to select it.

Alertness, Dodge, Mobility, Far Shot, Precise Shot, Point Blank Shot, Quick Draw, Shot on the Run.

Double Shot

At 4th level, the Bowmaster may fire two arrows instead of one with each attack. This attack is at -4 to hit. If the Bowmaster has more than one attack, she may decide whether or not to make a double shot on an attack-by-attack basis. Only one roll is made for the double shot; either both arrows hit or both miss.

Trick Shot

Upon reaching 5th level, the Bowmaster has learned a number of techniques that allow her to make incredibly precise shots. Doing so requires an action point and a full round to aim. Typical trick shots include:

- Hitting a lever or a button with an arrow, activating it.
- Knocking a sword or gun out of someone's grip.

Resolve the action as a normal disarm, except that it can be done at range and does not provoke an attack of opportunity (unless the Bowmaster is currently threatened in melee).

- Pinning someone's cloak to the floor, or their sleeve to a wall. (DC 5 Strength check to pull free.)

GMs should allow the trick shot to permit dramatic,

and mood-fitting actions, but *not* to do any hit point damage—you cannot use a trick shot to place an arrow directly into the eye of a rampaging gorthog, for example.

Sharp-Shooting

At 7th level, a Bowmaster gains the ability to score hits that others would miss due to the target's cover.

If the Bowmaster uses a bow to attack a target, the cover bonus to the target's Defense for one-quarter, one-half, three-quarters, or nine-tenths cover is reduced by 2.

Greater Weapon Focus

At 8th level, the Bowmaster receives a +1 competence bonus on attack rolls made with the specific bow chosen for the Weapon Focus class ability. This bonus stacks with the bonus granted from Weapon Focus.

Bullseye

At 10th level, a Bowmaster becomes so adept at using the bow to which she has applied Weapon Focus that her attacks with that bow can deal extra damage. With a successful attack, before damage is rolled, she can spend 1 action point to deal +3d6 points of damage.

Engineer

Engineers master the practical application of technology. An engineer concerns himself not with collecting lore for its own sake, but with what he can do with that lore. He can re-align the *lunth* crystals of a sky dreadnought even as it plummets groundward. He can repair a lightning gun even as a hungry zorl bears down on him. And if he can tell what all those mysterious squiggles mean, he can jury-rig a First Empire mechanism lost for untold generations beneath the Spiked Desert.

Select this class if you want your character to create and repair technological gear.

The fastest path to this class is from the Smart hero basic class, though other paths are possible.

Requirements

To qualify to become an Engineer, a character must fulfill the following criteria.

Skills: Craft (crystal) 6 ranks, Disable Device 6 ranks, and either Craft (electronic) 6 ranks or Craft (mechanical) 6 ranks.

Class Information

The following information pertains to the Engineer advanced class.

Hit Die: d6.

Action Points: 6 + one-half character level, rounded down.

Class Skills: The Engineer's class skills are as follows: Craft (crystal, electronic, mechanical) (Int), Demolitions (Int), Disable Device (Int), Knowledge (behavioral science, life science, physical science, technology) (Int), Navigate (Int), Pilot (Dex), Profession (Wis), Read/Write Language

(none), Repair (Int), Research (Int), Speak Language (none), Spot (Wis).

Skill Points at Each Level: 7 + Int modifier.

Class Features

The following features pertain to the Engineer advanced class.

Jury-rig

An Engineer gains a +2 competence bonus on Repair skill checks made to attempt temporary or jury-rigged repairs. See the Repair skill description (*d20 MODERN*, p. 70) for

details on jury-rigging.

At 7th level, this competence bonus increases to +4.

Identify Device

Many of the mechanisms which exist on Jupiter (or on most planetary romance worlds) were made long ago by cultures which were not scrupulous in their documentation practices. As a result, a mechanism found in a ruined city or forgotten vault might well be incomprehensible at first glance. It could be a gun, a scanner, a flashlight, or a firestarter.

An engineer can figure out what the device is without breaking it or even having heard of it before. Given ten minutes to examine a wholly alien device, an Engineer can make a DC 20 Intelligence check, adding his Engineer class levels to the result. A successful check means the Engineer has identified the basic type of device (weapon, sensor, tool, etc) and at least one major function. A failed roll means the Engineer has no clue regarding the device, while a natural 1 means a dangerous misidentification has occurred. (GMs may wish to make this check in secret.)

A few moments later, Talveen smiled. "It's an optical enhancer of some sort!" he declared confidently. "You look through here, and you press this..."

Given that the rocky ground of the mountains surrounding the forgotten city was virtually impervious to digging tools, I suppose it was a small mercy that there was not enough left of Talveen to bury.

(Personal Journal of Alicia Vanderveck, August 12, 2095)

Tinkering

An Engineer of 2nd level or higher can perform miracles when it comes to getting more out a device than was originally intended. By spending 1 action point and making a relevant Craft check, the Engineer can temporarily improve a machine's performance—at the risk of causing the machine to need repairs later. The Craft check's DC depends upon the type of improvement being made, as shown on the table below.



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Table 3-2: The Engineer

Class Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special	Defense Bonus	Reputation Bonus
1	+0	+0	+0	+2	Jury-rig +2	+1	+0
2	+1	+0	+0	+3	Identify device, Tinkering	+1	+0
3	+1	+0	+0	+3	Bonus feat	+2	+1
4	+2	+1	+1	+4	Unique creation	+2	+1
5	+2	+1	+1	+4	Mastercraft, Integrate tech	+3	+1
6	+3	+1	+1	+5	Bonus feat	+3	+2
7	+3	+2	+2	+5	Jury-rig +4	+4	+2
8	+4	+2	+2	+6	Mastercraft	+4	+2
9	+4	+2	+2	+6	Bonus feat	+5	+3
10	+5	+3	+3	+7	Mastercraft	+5	+3

Improvement	Craft DC	Repair Chance (d%)
<i>Ranged Weapons</i>		
+1 to damage	15	01-25
+2 to damage	20	01-50
+3 to damage	25	01-75
+5 ft. to range increment	15	01-25
+10 ft. to range increment	25	01-50
<i>Electronic Devices</i>		
+1 equipment bonus	15	01-25
+2 equipment bonus	20	01-50
+3 equipment bonus	25	01-75
<i>Vehicles</i>		
+1 on initiative checks	20	01-25
+1 to maneuver	25	01-50
+2 to maneuver	30	01-75

The Engineer performs the tinkering in 1 hour. He can't take 10 or take 20 on this check. If the check succeeds, the effect of the improvement lasts for a number of minutes equal to his Engineer class level, beginning when the object is first put into use. The Engineer selects the single improvement he wants to make prior to making the check. After the duration of the effect ends, the machine reverts to its previous state and a repair chance percentile roll is made. The result of this roll indicates whether the machine requires repairs before it can be used again.

Bonus Feat

At 3rd level, and again at 6th and 9th, the Engineer gains a bonus feat from the following list. The Engineer must meet all the prerequisites of the feat to select it.

Aircraft Operation, Builder, Educated, Gearhead, Iron Will, Meticulous, Renown, Studios, Vehicle Expert.

Unique Creation

At 4th level, the Engineer may create a new or highly modified weapon, tool, or vehicle which only he can use. This can best be simulated by using the Tinkering ability, but with no chance of a later breakdown. Furthermore, only the creator can use the device properly; anyone else will suffer a -4 non-proficiency penalty on the appropriate skill checks or attack rolls. An Engineer may have only one unique creation at a time, regardless of who is wielding it. Constructing a unique creation requires one week and the appropriate tools and resources.

Integrate Tech

Generally, equipment from one culture does not work well with that from another culture. Characters using a veth toolkit suffer a -4 penalty to repair imperial devices. First Empire technology is almost wholly at odds with any "modern" Jovian science, and so on. At 5th level and beyond, an Engineer can freely "mix and match" parts, using a First Empire battery to power an imperial lightning gun, for example.

Mastercraft

At 5th level, the Engineer becomes adept at creating mastercraft objects. He applies the mastercraft ability to one of his Craft skills (crystal, electronic, or mechanical). From this point on, he can build mastercraft objects using that skill.

With Craft (electronic), the Engineer can build electronic devices. With Craft (mechanical), the Engineer can build mechanical devices, including weapons. With Craft (crystal) the Engineer can build crystal-powered mastercraft weapons.

On average, it takes twice as long to build a mastercraft object as it does to build an ordinary object of the same type. The cost to build a mastercraft object is equal to the purchase DC for the components (see the appropriate Craft skill description) + the bonus provided by the mastercraft feature. You can add the mastercraft feature to an existing ordinary object by making the Wealth check and then making the Craft check as though you were constructing the object from scratch.

In addition to the Wealth check, the Engineer also must pay a cost in experience points equal to $25 \times$ his Engineer level $\times$ the bonus provided by the mastercraft feature. The XP must be paid before making the Craft check. If the expenditure of these XP would drop the Engineer to below the minimum needed for his current level, the XP can't be paid and the Engineer can't use his mastercraft ability until he gains enough additional XP to remain at his current level after the expenditure is made.

When successfully completed, a mastercraft object provides a +1 bonus to its quality compared to an ordinary object of the same type. All weapons and armor, and certain other types of equipment, such as computers and electronic devices, can be constructed as mastercraft objects.

At 8th level, the Engineer can add the mastercraft ability to another Craft skill, or he can improve his ability in the skill he selected at 5th level, so that his mastercraft objects provide a +2 bonus.

At 10th level, the Engineer adds another +1 bonus to one of his mastercraft abilities or may assign the mastercraft ability to a third Craft skill.

The Craft DC of a mastercraft object is the same as for a normal object of the same type, as described in the Craft skill description, with the following modification: For a +1 object, add +3 to the Craft DC; for a +2 object, add +5 to the Craft DC; and for a +3 object, add +10 to the Craft DC.

Explorer

The Explorer is driven to seek out new sights, new experiences, new places. Some Explorers are relentless agents of the Iron Lords, always on the lookout for new lands to conquer. Others are independent adventurers who seek joy and new experiences beyond the horizon or the money from exploiting time-lost secrets. Still others are wilderness warriors roaming the wilds to protect civilized lands from barbarian hordes. An Explorer excels at surviving on her own, gathering information, and paying absolute attention to the natural world around her.

Table 3-3: The Explorer

Class Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special	Defense Bonus	Reputation Bonus
1	+0	+1	+1	+0	Terrain expert I	+1	+0
2	+1	+2	+2	+0	Master tracker	+1	+0
3	+2	+2	+2	+1	Bonus feat	+2	+1
4	+3	+2	+2	+1	Survivor	+2	+1
5	+3	+3	+3	+1	Terrain expert II, shelter	+3	+1
6	+4	+3	+3	+2	Bonus feat	+3	+2
7	+5	+4	+4	+2	Wilderness guide	+4	+2
8	+6	+4	+4	+2	Hunter's strike	+4	+2
9	+6	+4	+4	+3	Bonus feat	+5	+3
10	+7	+5	+5	+3	Terrain expert III	+5	+3



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Select this class if your character spends a lot of time away from civilization, or if you wish to improve your character's skill at wilderness survival and general alertness.

The fastest path into this advanced class is from the Dedicated hero basic class, though other paths are possible.

Requirements

To become an Explorer, a character must fulfill the following criteria.

Base Attack Bonus: +2.

Skills: Survival 6 ranks, Treat Injury 6 ranks.

Feat: Track.

Class Information

The following information pertains to the Explorer advanced class.

Hit Die: d6.

Action Points: 6 + one-half character level, rounded down.

Class Skills: The Explorer's class skills are as follows:

Climb (Str), Concentration (Con), Craft (Int), Handle Animal (Cha), Hide (Dex), Jump (Str), Knowledge (nature) (Int), Listen (Wis), Move Silently (Dex), Navigate (Int), Profession (Wis), Read/Write Language (none), Ride (Dex), Search (Int), Speak Language (none), Spot (Wis), Survival (Wis), Swim (Str), Treat Injury (Wis), Use Rope (Dex).

Skill Points at Each Level: 4 + Int modifier.

Class Features

The following features pertain to the Explorer advanced class.

Terrain Expert

The Explorer knows how to use the features of the natural environment to her benefit. At 1st level, an Explorer selects a "favored terrain" from the following list: Aquatic, Desert, Forest, Hill, Marsh, Mountains, Plains, and Underground. When on her favored terrain, the Explorer gains a +2 circumstance bonus to Hide, Spot, Listen, and Survival skill checks.

At 5th and 10th levels, the Explorer may choose an additional favored terrain or may apply an additional +2 circumstance bonus to the above checks while on her favored terrain, bringing the total to +4 or +6. Thus by 10th level, an Explorer can have three favored terrains at +2 each, one at +6, or one at +2 and one at +4.

Master Tracker

At 2nd level and thereafter, the Explorer may add a competence bonus equal to one-half her class levels on Survival checks related to tracking.

Bonus Feats

At 3rd, 6th, and 9th level, the Explorer may choose a bonus feat from the following list. The Explorer must meet all the prerequisites of a feat to select it.

Alertness, Athletic, Dodge, Endurance, Focused, Great Fortitude, Guide, Low Profile, Quick Draw, Run, Stealthy.

Table 3-4: The Noble

Class Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special	Defense Bonus	Reputation Bonus
1	+0	+0	+1	+1	Right of passage	+0	+2
2	+1	+0	+2	+2	Investiture	+1	+2
3	+1	+1	+2	+2	Bonus feat	+1	+2
4	+2	+1	+3	+3	Bonus class skill	+1	+3
5	+2	+1	+3	+3	Retinue	+2	+3
6	+3	+2	+4	+4	Bonus feat	+2	+3
7	+3	+2	+4	+4	Greater investiture	+2	+4
8	+4	+2	+4	+4	Bonus class skill	+3	+4
9	+4	+3	+4	+4	Bonus feat	+3	+4
10	+4	+3	+5	+5	Demand obedience	+3	+5

Survivor

At 4th level, an Explorer can survive on limited rations and in harsh conditions. She gains a +4 competence bonus on all checks to avoid the ill effects of starvation, thirst, or extreme heat and cold. This bonus applies only to “environmental effects,” and not to the effects of direct exposure to fire, cold-based FX abilities, and so on.

Shelter

At 5th level, the Explorer develops an uncanny ability to locate shelter in the wilderness. Doing so requires the expenditure of an action point and a successful DC 15 Survival check. If the check fails, the action point is lost.

The GM should specify the type of shelter discovered, ensuring its suitability to the region and local environment. Possible shelters include an abandoned imperial fortress, a cave (complete with hidden entrance), the remains of a crashed sky dreadnought covered with men-glor vines, or any other enclosed space large enough to shelter fewer than a dozen characters.

Those without the shelter class feature require a DC 30 Spot check to notice the shelter, so those within are reasonably safe from accidental discovery and can safely wait out the time required to mend wounds, examine artifacts, or otherwise pass several hours or days in relative safety.

Wilderness Guide

At 7th level, the Explorer can use the aid another action (*d20 MODERN*, p. 47) to assist the Hide, Spot, Listen, and Survival checks of companions on her favored terrain. The bonus granted is equal to one-half the Explorer’s favored terrain bonuses (see above).

Hunter’s Strike

When battling animals (creatures with Int 2 or less) native to her favored terrains, an Explorer can increase her critical threat range by 1 for each time she has chosen a given terrain. Thus, if an Explorer has a +4 bonus to the appropriate skills when in Hills, she also has adds 2 to her critical threat range against animals native to the Hills.

Noble

A Noble rules, either by blood or by ambition. Skilled at manipulating the body politic, Nobles excel at diplomacy and gathering resources. Their political and rhetorical experience and knowledge allows them to issue orders with little question of whether they will be obeyed, and sets them apart from the common rabble.

Select this class if your character comes from a wealthy or powerful background or if your character has achieved a position of leadership (being named Captain of the Guard or the Queen’s Own Protector, for example) and wishes to exploit the political benefits of the position.

The fastest path to this class is from the Charismatic hero basic class, though other paths are possible.

Requirements

To become a Noble, a character must fulfill the following criteria.

Skills: Diplomacy 6 ranks, Intimidate 6 ranks.

Feat: Renown.

Class Information

The following information pertains to the Noble advanced class.



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Hit Die: d6.

Action Points: 6 + one-half character level, rounded down.

Class Skills: The Noble's class skills are as follows: Concentration (Int), Craft (visual art, writing) (Int), Diplomacy (Cha), Forgery (Int), Gamble (Wis), Gather Information (Cha), Intimidate (Cha), Knowledge (current events, civics) (Int), Profession (Wis), Read/Write Language (none), Ride (Dex), Sense Motive (Wis), Speak Language (none).

Skill Points Each Level: 5 + Int modifier.

Class Features

The following features pertain to the Noble advanced class.

Right of Passage

Titles and prestige often open doors closed to the common folk. In lands in which the political force that granted the Noble his title hold sway, the Noble gains a circumstance bonus equal to one-half his class levels (minimum +1) on Bluff, Diplomacy, and Intimidate checks made to bypass guards, enter a celebration without an invitation, sit in the Purple Stands in the Arena of Kuldaar without the proper identification, or other such situations requiring clout and political prestige.

In lands unknown or hostile to the character's political entity, the character enjoys no bonus.

Investiture

At 2nd level, the Noble gains a small patch of land with a reasonable dwelling upon it, a used veth yacht, an upper-floor apartment in Kuldaar, or the like. He also gains a +3 Wealth bonus due to revenues related to his newfound prestige.

Bonus Feats

At 3rd, 6th, and 9th level, the Noble may select a bonus feat from the following list. The Noble must meet all the prerequisites for the feat to select it.

Animal Affinity, Archaic Weapons Proficiency, Confident, Creative, Deceptive, Iron Will, Renown, Trustworthy, Windfall.

Bonus Class Skill

At 4th and 8th level, a Noble's access to a wide range of instructors and experts and extra time to indulge in extravagant hobbies allows him to select one cross-class skill, changing it to a class skill. Newly gained ranks in the skill may be purchased at the reduced cost, but the change has no effect upon previously purchased class ranks.

Retinue

At 5th level, the Noble gains a number of loyal servants equal to his Charisma bonus +1. Determine the servants' level by subtracting 5 from the Noble's character level. The GM determines the retinue's exact composition, but all are ordinaries as described on p. 270 of the *d20 MODERN Roleplaying Game*. Consult the Noble player for ideas on the type of retinue he'd enjoy, and do your best to make the NPCs fun background characters.

Despite the retinue's loyalty, they have their limit, and are not simply mindless drones. They meet orders to march into obvious death or to commit gross crimes with out-and-out refusal. Continued abuses force them to break for freedom at the earliest opportunity and report the offenses to the Noble's superiors or family.

Greater Investiture

At 7th level, the Noble receives an extremely valuable grant from his political entity. Possible greater investitures include a large plot of land with an estate and small village, a rooftop mansion in Kuldaar, or a luxurious large sky yacht. The prestige and revenues associated with the greater investiture grant the Noble a +3 Wealth bonus.

Demand Obedience

At 10th level, the Noble commands such prestige that his orders carry significant weight within his own realm. To issue an "impossible to refuse" order to an ordinary, the Noble expends an action point, forcing a target to make a successful Will save (DC = 10 + the Noble's class level + the Noble's Charisma modifier) or obey instantly.



Table 3-5: The Scholar

Class Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special	Defense Bonus	Reputation Bonus
1	+0	+0	+1	+1	Lost knowledge	+0	+0
2	+1	+0	+2	+2	Useful trivia	+1	+0
3	+1	+1	+2	+2	Bonus feat	+1	+1
4	+2	+1	+2	+2	Scientific improvisation	+1	+1
5	+2	+1	+3	+3	Lost knowledge	+2	+1
6	+3	+2	+3	+3	Bonus feat	+2	+2
7	+3	+2	+4	+4	Linguistic lore	+2	+2
8	+4	+2	+4	+4	Skill mastery	+3	+2
9	+4	+3	+4	+4	Bonus feat	+3	+3
10	+5	+3	+5	+5	Lost knowledge	+3	+3

If following the order would result in the target's immediate death or injury, the target receives a +10 circumstance bonus to the saving throw. If following the order "merely" results in punishment or execution, however, the target receives no bonus. Thus a character ordered to "attack that charging zorll!" would likely receive a bonus, but a character ordered to "release those prisoners into my custody immediately!" would receive no bonus.

This effect works only on ordinaries, and has no effect upon regular characters.

Scholar

The world is ancient, and much lore has been lost or forgotten. The scholar knows of the time-lost empires whose ruins mar the landscape. She can name the elder cataclysms that carved the shorelines, and knows which berries grant a man immunity to flame for a time and which will kill him with slow agony. While not especially useful in hand-to-hand combat against the Green Serpent of Ishkar, a scholar's knowledge reveals that the serpent's weakness is its vulnerable third eye.

Select this class if you wish to know things. A lot of things. Things man was not meant to know, in some cases.

The fastest path to this class is from the Smart hero basic class.

Requirements

To qualify to become a Scholar, a character must fulfill the following criteria.

Skills: Craft (crystal) 6 ranks or Craft (pharmaceutical) 6 ranks or Decipher Script 6 ranks plus 6 ranks in Knowledge (history, life sciences or technology) and Research 6 ranks.

Class Information

The following information pertains to the Scholar advanced class.

Hit Die: d6.

Action Points: 6 + one-half character level, rounded down.

Class Skills: The Scholar's class skills are as follows: Craft (chemical, crystal, pharmaceutical, woodworking) (Int), Decipher Script (Int), Demolitions (Int), Disable Device (Int), Knowledge (history, earth and life sciences, physical

sciences, technology) (Int), Navigate (Int), Pilot (Dex), Profession (Wis), Read/Write Language (none), Research (Int), Ride (Dex), Search (Int), Speak Language (none).

Skill Points at Each Level: 7 + Int modifier.

Class Features

The following features pertain to the Engineer advanced class.

Lost Knowledge

At 1st, 5th, and 10th level, the scholar unearths an ancient secret that unlocks practical improvements. Select one of the following benefits:

- +1 Defense
- +1 base attack bonus
- +1d6 hit points
- +3 Wealth bonus
- +1 Reputation bonus
- Designate one additional skill as a class skill

Decide the nature of the secret and how understanding it grants the chosen benefit. For example, a Scholar might learn an ancient meditation ritual that dulls pain, granting extra hit points. Another secret might concern a long-forgotten method of improving the processing of *telgir*, granting the Scholar access to additional Wealth.



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Useful Trivia

The Scholar accumulates a vast catalog of information in her brain. Every so often, a fact comes in extremely handy. By spending an action point, a Scholar can “remember” a bit of data which grants herself or an ally one of the following benefits:

- +5 on a skill check about to be made
- +2 on the character's next attack
- +1d6 damage to the character's next successful attack

The player should embrace the opportunity to roleplay the action. Rather than saying “I spend an action point and Kor deals +1d6 damage for the next round,” say “Hmmm. According to *Davren's Bestiary*, zorls have a particularly sensitive throat.”

Bonus Feat

At 3rd, 6th, and 9th levels, the Scholar may choose a bonus feat from the following list. The Scholar must meet all the prerequisites for the feat to select it.

Attentive, Cautious, Combat Expertise, Creative, Exotic Weapon Proficiency, Exotic Firearm Proficiency, Guide, Low Profile, Renown, Studious, Windfall.

Scientific Improvisation

At 4th level, a Scholar gains the ability to improvise solutions using common objects and her scientific know-how. This ability lets her create objects in a dramatic situation quickly and cheaply, but that have a limited duration.

By spending 1 action point and combining common objects with a Craft check that corresponds to the function desired, the Scholar can build a tool or device to deal with any situation. The DC for the craft check is equal to 5 + the purchase DC of the object that most closely matches the desired function. So, to improvise a single-use weapon that deals the same damage at the same range as a Desert Eagle, the DC for the Craft (mechanical) check is 23 (5 + 18).

Only objects that normally can be used more than once can be improvised. For example, a Scholar can't use scientific improvisation to build an explosive, since that's normally an object that's usable only once.

Electronic devices, special tools, weapons, mechanical devices, and more can be built with scientific improvisation. It takes a full-round action to make an object with scientific improvisation. The object, when put into use, lasts for a number of rounds equal to the Scholar's class level, or until the end of the current encounter, before it breaks down. It can't be repaired.

Linguistic Lore

At 7th level, the Scholar gains the ability to instantly learn a foreign language by comparing it to known languages and deciphering the changes made from their mutual root. In this manner, a Scholar may “learn” a number of languages equal to her Intelligence bonus. If the scholar later spends a skill point to learn the language, this frees up an additional linguistic lore “language slot.”

Use of this ability requires observation of a living being speaking the language for a full minute. Linguistic lore cannot be used to decipher unknown script.

Skill Mastery

At 8th level, a Scholar selects a number of skills from her class list equal to 3 + her Intelligence modifier. When making a skill check using one of these skills, the Scholar may take 10 even if stress and distractions would normally prevent her from doing so. She becomes so accomplished in the use of these skills that she can use them reliably even under adverse conditions.

Trader

More than a simple shopkeeper or artisan, the Trader is a merchant-adventurer whose business dealings take her to distant lands known to most folk only in rumors. She can talk an Iron Lord into buying rust-proofing solution for his silken robes or convince the floating brains of Cloud Valley to buy wheeled riding carts. Always one step ahead of the law (and angry customers), the Trader is not above taking on some honest work now and then, if it can't be helped.

Select this advanced class if you want your character to be able to talk anyone out of or into anything, and if you want her to always get the best prices on goods and services.

The fastest path into this advanced class is from the Charismatic hero basic class, though other paths are possible.

Requirements

To become a Trader, a character must fulfill the following criteria.

Skills: Diplomacy 6 ranks, Bluff 6 ranks.

Feat: Windfall.

Class Information

The following information pertains to the Trader advanced class.

Hit Die: d6.

Action Points: 6 + one-half character level, rounded down.

Class Skills: Bluff (Cha), Concentration (Con), Craft (Int), Decipher Script (Int), Diplomacy (Cha), Forgery (Int), Gamble (Wis), Gather Information (Cha), Handle Animal (Cha), Knowledge (Int), Listen (Wis), Profession (Wis), Read/Write Language (none), Repair (Int), Sense Motive (Wis), Speak Language (none), Spot (Wis).

Skill Points at Each Level: 7 + Int modifier.

Class Features

The following features pertain to the Trader advanced class.

Master Merchant

The Trader is an extraordinarily skilled bargainer. She may add her class levels on any Diplomacy or Bluff check, provided that the check is made in a business or trading situation. (Trying to convince a guard to let you pass a door is not such a situation; trying to convince someone to let you “lease” his prized vort for a fraction of what it's worth is.)

Patter

The Trader is a skilled weaver of words. With the expenditure of an action point, the Trader can force a target to make a successful Will save (DC = 10 + the Trader's class level + the Trader's Charisma modifier) or become enthralled by the Trader's patter for a number of rounds equal to the Trader's Charisma bonus. A target who fails the Will save can do nothing but listen to the trader's spiel unless attacked or otherwise directly threatened. The victim suffers a -4 penalty to any Spot or Listen checks while enthralled by the Trader's speech. This ability may be used on a given person only once per day.

Glib

"Would you believe... *two* Imperial Sky Dreadnoughts?"

At 3rd level, the Trader gains the ability to spend an action point to retry a failed Bluff, Diplomacy, or Intimidate check.

Small Fortune

The Trader has managed to pull off an impressive deal, and gains a +3 bonus to Wealth.

Bargainer

At 5th level, it becomes nearly impossible to convince the Trader to pay anything but absolute rock bottom prices for anything. By spending an action point and winning an opposed Diplomacy check with another merchant, the Trader can subtract a number up to her Charisma bonus from an item's purchase DC (minimum 1).

Packing

A Trader must move a lot of goods, often with limited help. Knowledge of how to optimally pack containers and distribute weight allows a trader to increase her carrying capacity by 25%.

What You Want

At 7th level, a Trader can gain uncanny insight into a target's desires. The Trader must speak with the target for a full minute. Thereafter, she makes a DC 20 Sense Motive check. Success indicates she has figured out what the target really wants or needs, even if the target has not

said so explicitly. If the trader has access to the item (or can convince the target she can get access to it with a successful Bluff check), the target's attitude toward the trader immediately improves by one step.

Large Fortune

The Trader has succeeded in an exceptionally lucrative deal, and gains an additional +3 Wealth bonus.

Good For It

At 10th level, the Trader is so skilled at negotiation that she can convince a seller that payment is forthcoming even when it is not. She may spend up to 5 action points in one round to increase her effective Wealth by 2 per action point (granting a maximum +10 bonus).

The Trader then chooses one of the following options:

- **Pay it off:** The trader's Wealth is reduced by the amount gained, and recovers at 1 per month.

- **Skip town:** The trader's normal Wealth remains



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Table 3-6: The Trader

Class Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special	Defense Bonus	Reputation Bonus
1	+0	+0	+1	+2	Master merchant	+0	+1
2	+1	+0	+2	+3	Patter	+1	+1
3	+2	+1	+2	+3	Glib, bonus feat	+1	+1
4	+3	+1	+2	+4	Small fortune	+1	+2
5	+3	+1	+3	+4	Bargainer, packing	+2	+2
6	+4	+2	+3	+5	Bonus feat	+2	+2
7	+5	+2	+4	+5	What you want	+2	+3
8	+6	+2	+4	+6	Large fortune	+3	+3
9	+6	+3	+4	+6	Bonus feat	+3	+3
10	+7	+3	+5	+7	Good for it	+3	+4

unchanged, but she gains an enemy. The extent of the merchant's enmity and how it ultimately affects the campaign is up to the GM.

Wise One

Some secrets aren't found in books. The ways of the world reveal themselves not only to the clever, but also to the

wise. Listen to the sound of the trees, the ripple of the water, the laughter of the wind, and you may learn more than you will ever find in ancient tomes or knowledge gems. The Wise One follows such a path, mastering skills and lore passed down through personal training and tradition. Wise Ones master the arts of healing and unlock the secrets of the animal world.

Select this class if you wish to benefit from time spent under the tutelage of a tribal shaman or healer.

The fastest path to this class is from the Dedicated hero basic class, though other paths are possible.

Requirements

To qualify to become a Wise One, a character must fulfill the following criteria.

Base Attack Bonus: +2.

Skills: Treat Injury 6 ranks, Survival 6 ranks, Knowledge (biology) 4 ranks.

Class Information

The following information pertains to the Wise One advanced class.

Hit Die: d8.

Action Points: 6 + one-half character level, rounded down.

Class Skills: The Wise One's class skills are as follows: Concentrate (Con), Craft (pharmaceutical) (Int), Diplomacy (Cha), Handle Animal (Cha), Intimidate (Cha), Knowledge (behavioral sciences, current events, earth and life sciences, popular culture, technology) (Int), Listen (Wis), Profession (Wis), Read/Write Language (none), Research (Int), Ride (Dex), Speak Language (none), Spot (Wis), Survival (Wis), Swim (Str), Treat Injury (Wis).

Skill Points at Each Level: 5 + Int modifier.

Healing Lore

A 1st-level Wise One may add a +1 competence bonus on any Treat Injury skill check. The bonus increases by +1 at 5th and 8th level.



ATILLA ADORJANY

Table 3-7: The Wise One

Class Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special	Defense Bonus	Reputation Bonus
1	+0	+2	+0	+1	Healing lore +1	+1	+1
2	+1	+3	+0	+2	Expert healer	+1	+1
3	+1	+3	+1	+2	Bonus feat, medicine bag	+2	+1
4	+2	+4	+1	+2	Antidote	+2	+2
5	+2	+4	+1	+3	Healing lore +2	+3	+2
6	+3	+5	+2	+3	Bonus feat	+3	+2
7	+3	+5	+2	+4	Minor medical miracle, Improve poison	+4	+3
8	+4	+6	+2	+4	Healing lore +3	+4	+3
9	+4	+6	+3	+4	Bonus feat	+5	+3
10	+5	+7	+3	+5	Medical miracle	+5	+4

Expert Healer

At 2nd level and higher, the Wise One's ability to restore hit points with an herb bag or surgery kit and a successful use of the Treat Injury skill improves. In addition to the normal hit point recovery rate (1d4 for an herb bag, 1d6 per patient's character level for a surgery kit), the Wise One restores 1 hit point for every level he has in this advanced class.

Medicine Bag

Upon reaching 3rd level, the Wise One can go on a spirit quest, spending at least a week in the wilderness, gathering the best herbs, roots, leaves, dried insects, and other natural remedies and reagents and placing them into his personalized medicine bag. The bag operates as a special herb bag (see Chapter 4), granting the Wise One a +2 circumstance bonus on Treat Injury checks so long as the bag is in his possession. The Wise One must spend one full day per month to restock the medicine bag. If the bag is lost or destroyed, the Wise One may gather another by spending one week on another spirit quest in the wilderness.

Antidote

At 4th level, the Wise One becomes unusually well versed in the ways of poisons and their natural treatments. If he has access to his medicine bag (see above), the Wise One may spend an action point to attempt to negate a poison's effects before the victim has made her secondary save (for example, if the poisoning occurred less than a minute ago). To do so, the Wise One makes a Treat Injury check with a DC equal to the DC of the poison's initial save. If the check is successful, the poison's victim automatically succeeds her secondary save. If the Wise One succeeds by more than 5, half of the damage already done is negated (round fractions down).

Minor Medical Miracle

At 7th level or higher, a Wise One can save a character reduced to -10 hit points or lower. If the Wise One is able to administer aid within 3 rounds of the character's death,

he can make a Treat Injury check. The DC for this check is 30, and the Wise One can't take 10 or take 20. If the check succeeds, the dead character can make a Fortitude save (DC 15) to stabilize and be restored to 0 hit points.

If the Wise One fails the skill check or the patient fails the save, the dead character can't be saved.

Improve Poison

In addition to curing poisons, a Wise One of 7th level or higher can amplify their effects. Doing so requires an hour of contemplation of a poison dose and the Wise One's medicine bag (see above). On a successful Knowledge (biology) skill check (with a DC equal to the poison's original save DC), the Wise One can increase the poison's save DC by 3 or add 1 to the damage dealt by the poison's primary and secondary effects. Improving a poison's damage and save DC requires two hours of experimentation and two successful Knowledge (biology) checks against the poison's original save DC.

Failing the Knowledge check by more than 5 or rolling a "natural 1" indicates harmful exposure to the poison. The Wise One suffers the poison's effects without the benefit of a primary saving throw (he does, however, receive a secondary save).

Medical Miracle

At 10th level, a Wise One can revive a character reduced to -10 hit points or lower. If the Wise One is able to administer aid within 3 minutes of the character's death, he can make a Treat Injury check. The DC for this check is 40, and the Wise One can't take 10 or take 20. If the check succeeds, the dead character can make a Fortitude save (DC 20) to stabilize and be restored to 1d6 hit points.

If the Wise One fails the skill check or the patient fails the Fortitude save, the dead character can't be restored.



JEFF CARLISLE

IV: WELCOME TO YOUR NEW HOME



Jupiter is not what scientists think it is. Beneath the upper layers of atmosphere exists not simply more gas shrouding a core of compressed liquid helium, but rather a world much like Earth, only many times larger. This world has almost no dense metals; despite its vast bulk, its gravity is roughly equal to that of Earth. A breathable oxygen atmosphere shrouds the planet. Perpetual lightning storms above the air layer provide a source of light. Beneath this eternal glow, life has taken root. A hundred different races share the world, and uncounted thousands of societies have formed.

Centuries ago, an iron-based asteroid at least a hundred miles long crashed into the world. The culture which found it soon learned the secrets of ironworking, and, using the strange metal from beyond the sky carved out the greatest empire Jupiter had ever known. Taking its name from iron, it called itself the Grey Empire. The rulers of the empire became known as the Iron Lords of Jupiter!

The Skyglow

Strikingly unlike that of Earth, Jupiter's sky is a solid mass of luminescence. The people of Jupiter know of no sun, no stars, no moons. They do not distinguish between day and night. The glow beyond the clouds brightens sometimes, as strange storms rage in the atmosphere above it. Sometimes it dims, some mysterious reaction of energy and chemicals. But there is no timing or cycle to these events. This phenomenon has had many effects on day-to-day life on Jupiter.

Timekeeping: With no sun, moon, or stars, timekeeping is arbitrary. The basic unit of time is the "sleep," roughly equal to eight hours. There are, thus, three sleeps in a Terran day. Beyond the "sleep," time grows even more arbitrary. Within the empire and its domains, units of time include the *daal* (equal to ten sleeps, or about three days); the *tovdaal* (ten daals, or very roughly a month); and the *vikaan* (which translates roughly to "generation," and is about 30 Earth years).

The Empire requires precision, and has developed complex electromechanical clocks which synchronize with each other via etheric waves. Sky-dreadnoughts often carry such clocks, which use batteries to keep the time and re-sync when the ships return to Kuldaar.

Navigation: Without stars, a moon, or magnetic north, navigating out of sight of land is extremely difficult, and rarely attempted. As a result, travel around the larger seas and oceans is a slow affair, involving hugging the coastline and slowly circumnavigating the sea. Islands, even sizeable ones, located in the centers of the sea may never be encountered. As a result, the locations of many "lost" or "legendary" sites are said to lie on such islands, making verification of the legend difficult or impossible.

The First Empire

Throughout Jupiter, there exist locations which bear tribute to the existence of a mighty, perhaps even globe-spanning, power, which nonetheless vanished before the recorded history of any race known to the marikon or veth. Only the faded outlines of cities, strange artifacts, and extraordinary relics remain. Legends of intact or nearly intact cities, brimming with artifacts and lost knowledge, continue to lure treasure hunters from throughout the world.

First Empire technology is almost incomprehensible. It does not use the metals and alloys of the Grey Empire, nor the crystals and woods of most other Jovian civilizations. A human would say their devices are made of plastic, but only because the hard, light, materials used resemble nothing else. The secrets of their manufacture are long lost. Within the Grey Empire, all artifacts are considered "imperial property" and will be impounded unless the owner can provide documentation showing that they are licensed to use the device. Such artifacts include:

Sky bracelet: A small bracelet made of striated bands of black and white "plastic," the bracelet is warm to the touch (as is most First Empire technology), and contains several small depressions in the surface. Experimentation

reveals that one depression causes the wearer of the bracelet to rise at a rate of 20 feet per round, a second lowers the wearer to the ground at half that speed, and a third grants forward momentum, with the wearer able to control his direction by shifting position. The bracelet provides a flight speed of 60, and generally provides one hour of levitation before it must recharge itself, which it does by unknown means. The recharging period lasts twelve hours. The bracelet deposits the wearer on the ground if its power is running low. Sky bracelets are among the more common First Empire artifacts, though they are still very rare. **Purchase DC:** 30.

Paralysis Beamer: Yellow spiral patterns cover this smooth ovoid of red "plastic." A small dimpled indentation and raised bump mark one end. Pressing the bump blasts a beam of brilliant blue, perfectly straight light from the indentation. Any living being struck by the beam must make a successful DC 18 Fortitude save to avoid becoming paralyzed for 1 minute, plus 1 minute for each point by which the save failed. The beam does not effect undead, constructs, outsiders, or oozes. A paralysis beamer is an exotic firearm with a range increment of 20 feet. Most beamers have enough power for 20 shots. They cannot be recharged. **Purchase DC:** 35.

The Grey Empire

The Grey Empire sprawls along the western shore of the Cuthalik Ocean, with the capital city of Kuldaar ringing a large bay and sprawling outward onto several islands. From Kuldaar, a webwork of roads links the many foundries, smelting pits, and mines which surround the city. The iron industry is the key to the empire's existence, and the Iron Lords fear letting it out of their sight.

Kuldaar itself is a marvel. The huge city holds at least ten million beings, drawn from a dozen races. Crystal and steel towers strain toward the eternal neon sky, and steam-powered trains chug along mazes of tracks. Flying cars, the province of the wealthy, flit from building to building above rooftop expanses planted with exotic vegetation. Far below lies the dank undercity, where escaped slaves, criminals, and the poor dwell in perpetual lightless squalor.

Kuldaar's most outstanding structure is its arena, a gargantuan circle ringed by row after row of tiered seats, the cultural centerpiece of the city. Scores of lesser venues, hosting smaller events or more personal conflicts, surround the central arena, forming a virtual city based upon gambling, excess, bloodsport, and vice. Beneath the streets, a complex maze of holding pens, slave dwellings, and storerooms serve as home to the underclass of guards, menials, and gladiators who staff the festivities above. Some arena workers do not see the skyglow for weeks at a time.

The city's busy ports keep Kuldaar alive, bringing in food and trade goods from the provinces surrounding the Cuthalik. The ports ship out armies to garrison existing provinces and conquer new ones, for the growth of the empire demands eternal fresh blood. Some day, the Iron

Lords claim, every nation will pay fealty to Kuldaar.

For a thousand miles in every direction from the city, there are no more nations, just provinces of the Empire. Beyond this border, nations exist mostly at the sufferance of the Empire, and they know it. None dare speak out. Only in lands more distant yet do folk speak openly of rebellion or resistance.

One of the nations most newly taken by the empire is the City-State of Salimar, once the capital of an empire itself. Today, it is the last true city of the veth, and it rules, or at least oversees, a collection of small towns and villages, the final dregs of what was once a mighty power. A small number of veth remember their own days of glory, and refuse to gently fade into nothingness as servitors of the Iron Lords. While the empire usually ignores such sentiments, their continual expression by the Prince-Heir to Veth has angered the provincial governor, which is why the prince was recently "invited" to Kuldaar, where he is effectively a political prisoner. So long as he remains thus, no rebellion will take hold in the Salimar domains.

Technology

Jupiter's technology has been shaped, above all, by the relative rarity of metal. The necessary reliance upon wood, animal parts, and crystals might have stranded the planet in a state of near-barbarism but for the fact that many of Jupiter's natural materials possess unusually beneficial properties.

One such material is *lunth*, a pale lavender crystal usually found imbedded in igneous rock strata. On the surface, *lunth* is simply a pretty crystal, useful as jewelry and nothing more. When properly treated, however, it emits a field that counters the force of gravitation. Focusing light through a *lunth* crystal at specific angles directs this field, making it possible for the crystal to lift and propel a craft.

The related jade green or ruby red *kivas* crystals are considerably rarer. When correctly shaped (a delicate art) and exposed to a brief electric spark, a *kivas* crystal discharges a bolt of deadly energy. The bolt's force depends upon the size of the crystal and spark. Each crystal holds a limited number of charges before it must be recharged. *Kivas* crystals gain 1 charge for each hour of exposure to the skyglow.

Jovians use flawed or misshapen *kivas* in the production of *jirathite*, a powerful explosive. *Jirathite* resembles a reddish-brown clay, and bears a distinctly "gritty" texture. While used much as earthling use plastic explosives, *jirathite* also commonly serves as the primary ingredient of crude clay grenades. *Jirathite* rarely reacts to impact, but even a tiny electric spark may set it off.

The less common *telgir* wood, harvested from trees found in the temperate zones surrounding the Cuthalik Ocean, is light and easy to carve when harvested, but becomes as strong as bronze when exposed to a low flame over a period of several days. Jovians use *telgir* primarily for weapons and tools.

Jovians excel at the processing of animal parts. The hide of a gorlak, a sort of snake-cow, makes excellent armor. Other animal parts become nails, cloth, or tools. Though they lack motors or engines (the Iron Lords notwithstanding), Jovian cultures have managed to build great cities and enjoy a high level of comfort in their daily lives.

The Iron Lords, with access to metal, have discovered much of the technology of nineteenth century Earth, combining it with the native technology of Jupiter to great effect. *Lunth*-powered iron warships cruise the skies, and gorlak-hide armor laced with steel turns blades of *telgir* aside. The Jovians lack gunpowder, possibly because sulphur is rare and possibly because *kivas* crystals provide all the ranged killing power anyone could want.

Jovian technology includes:

Visio screens: Usually circular in form and ranging from 1 foot to 4 feet in diameter, a visio screen displays a black and white image. A row of controls along the bottom allows a user to “dial” the screen to “call” a particular individual or location. Visio screens are all two-way; anyone in front of one can be seen by the person they are talking to. Occasionally, the Iron Lords usurp the entire screen network for a one-way announcement or proclamation transmission. **Purchase DC:** 20.

Monorails: Kuldaar’s wealthy get around in private air-cars, but the majority of its citizens use the monorail network which crosses the city like an iron web. Monorail trains run continuously, powered by steam engines made possible by imperial iron. The noisy monorail cars vibrate ferociously, but they’ll get you where you need to go.

Other Locations

Jupiter is an immense world, and the realm of the Grey Empire is, ultimately, a very small part of it. Some other interesting locales include:

The Vastness: While the Cuthalik Ocean is large—roughly the size of Earth’s Atlantic—it is a small lake compared to the Vastness, a massive body of water whose exact extent has never been measured. Its uncharted depths extend more than twenty miles below the surface of the water. Travelers and explorers hug the coastline—it has never been crossed—and a full circumnavigation could take decades. The ocean’s inner reaches could hold any number of secrets, including immense island continents, beasts of staggering size and bizarre configuration, odd cultures and civilizations, and more.

The Spongewood: Save for a wider range of coloration, most of Jupiter’s trees roughly resemble those of Earth. The bizarre region known as the Spongewood is a notable exception. Giant fungi dominates the Spongewood, ranging from tiny mushroom patches to towering thirty-foot fungal trees. Numerous unusual lifeforms, many unique to the region, dwell within the Spongewood.

Legends suggest that the Spongewood was created in an event similar to the Skyfall—that the sky vomited forth a piece of itself which landed here and produced

this place. Though no known intelligent species inhabit the fungal forest, travelers report strange manlike shapes moving among the stalks, and it’s certainly true that not all those who enter the deepest part of the wood return. Renegades and refugees often attempt to find safe haven here, as few will pursue a fleeing man into the murky and ill-smelling forest depths.

Equipment

In general, any mundane item which could exist at the local technological level, and which does not require metal, could be found given some time to look. If the PCs need them, assign a suitable cost and make the relevant Wealth checks.

Iron weapons far outclass any other melee weapon on Jupiter. Decrease the armor bonus of any armor (including the natural armor of animals) by 2 when that armor is used against iron weapons.

Veth dagger: The most common weapon carried by free veth, this slim blade is made of a polished and sharpened *kliver* thorn set into an ornate grip.

Veth dueling blade: Generally possessed only by members of the upper class, this thin, slightly curved blade of *telgir* wood resembles a cross between a scimitar and a fencing foil. Each weapon’s unique wood grain makes it distinctive—the patterns on the grain become a mark by which the weapon is known. Over time, a well-used blade absorbs enough blood to become almost pitch black. Jovians respect and fear the wielders of such “deep-stained blades,” and such wielders are often challenged by young bravos seeking to prove their merit.

Iron knife: A typical imperial weapon, iron knives are nearly commonplace even outside of Kuldaar, as many have been manufactured. There is little distinctive about the short, thick, single-edged knife.

Iron short blade: The weapon of the Grey Legions, the short blade doubles as a single-edged slashing weapon with a nastily serrated edge.

Iron long blade: The heavy, double-edged long blade is generally carried only by elite soldiers and bodyguards within the empire. Within the bounds of the empire, possession by unauthorized wielders is usually met with summary execution.

Kivas blade (exotic): Very few *kivas* blades are made today; those who have access to the rare crystals prefer to use them in guns. Some few remain, however, and craftsmen adept in the ancient ways still know the secret of their manufacture. Composed of a length of *telgir* wood inset with perfectly carved slivers of *kivas* set at key points, a *kivas* blade also bears a sparking device built into its hilt. The blade unleashes a charge of energy as it contacts flesh, dealing fire damage in addition to the blade’s normal damage.

A *kivas* blade can unleash 10 bolts before it must be recharged. It continues to function as a normal weapon even after its charges have been expended. Making a *kivas* blade requires DC 25 Craft (woodworking) and Craft (crys-

Table 4-1: Equipment

Weapon	Damage	Critical	Damage Type	Size	Weight	Purchase DC	Restriction
Veth dagger	1d4	19–20	Piercing	Tiny	1 lb.	4	—
Veth dueling blade	1d6	19–20	Slashing	Medium	5 lb.	7	—
Iron knife	1d4	20	Slashing	Tiny	1.5 lb.	10	Imperial (–2)
Iron short blade	1d6	20	Slashing	Small	3.0 lb.	12	Imperial (–4)
Iron long blade	1d8	20	Slashing	Medium	8.0 lb.	15	Imperial (–6)
Bladed lash	1d6	20	Slashing	Medium	4.0 lb.	10	Imperial (–3)
Kivas blade	1d4+1d6	20	Slashing + Fire	Small	2.0 lb.	21	—
Marikon bone spikes	see below	20	Slashing	Tiny	.25 lb.	18	—

Weapon	Damage	Critical	Dam. Type	Range Inc.	ROF	Magazine	Size	Weight	DC	Restriction
Kivas blaster	2d6	20	Fire	40	S	20*	S	2 lb.	18	—
Kivas bolter	2d8	20	Fire	20	S	10	S	3 lb.	20	—
Kivas hunting rifle	2d8	20	Fire	60	S	15	M	6 lb.	21	—
Lightning rifle	2d6	20	Elec.	30	S	20	M	8 lb.	16	Imperial (–4)

Weapon	Damage	Critical	Dam. Type	Burst Radius	Ref. DC	Range Inc.	Size	Weight	DC	Restriction
Jirathite	3d6	—	Conc.	5 ft.	15	10 ft.	Tiny	1 lb.	18	Imperial (–3)

Object	Size	Weight	Purchase DC
Zorlblood elixir	Tiny	0.25 lb.	20
Herb bag	Medium	1 lb.	18

tal) checks. The same craftsman must make both checks.

Kivas blaster: The most common type of *kivas*-based weapon, this pistol bears an ornately carved wooded grip that houses a sparking mechanism and the weapon's trigger. Two sturdy tines secure the *kivas* crystal, with a polished glass lens at the end of the tines serving to focus the weapon's energy discharge.

Kivas bolter: Much less common than the blaster and favored by those who know they will be close to their enemy before managing to get off a shot, a *kivas* blaster uses a high-powered spark and a dispersion lens to create a powerful (but slightly inaccurate) bolt.

Lightning rifle: Due to the rarity of *kivas* and the delicate work required to shape and set the crystals, mass production of *kivas*-based armaments is impossible. Thus, the Iron Lords have created the lightning rifle, bulky but effective bolt casters crafted from the metal only they have mastered. The weapon fires an arc of powerful electricity at a target. Welders can adjust the weapon to fork the bolt, striking two targets which are no more than ten feet apart. Each target is attacked separately, and both attacks are made at –4. This consumes two charges.

Marikon bone spikes: This set of several small, hooked, metal blades, designed to fit onto marikon outcroppings, increases the damage of a marikon's unarmed attack by +1.

Jirathite: This powerful explosive resembles grainy red clay. Usually triggered by a simple mechanical timer, a small chip of *kivas*, and a spark. Impact is not enough to detonate *jirathite*, but a bolt fired from a *kivas*-powered weapon at a lump of *jirathite* will ignite the substance.

Anyone holding *jirathite* who is struck by such a weapon must make a DC 10 Reflex save or the material will be ignited. Transporting *jirathite* is not for the cow-

ardly, or for the wise.

Zorlblood elixir: This potent drug, made from the blood of a deadly native creature known as a zorl, has tremendous restorative powers. A single vial, once consumed, cures 2d6 hit points instantly. Manufacturing one dose of this drug requires a DC 18 Craft (chemistry) check.

Herb bag: This belt pouch contains many small pockets and compartments, filled with a variety of medicinal supplies—dried herbs, roots, elixirs, and so on needed for Treat Injury checks.

Language

The folk of Jupiter do not speak one tongue. Indeed, cataloging the languages of the world is a task which occupies scholars across the planet; none have managed to document more than a small portion. The most common languages in the area around the Cuthalik Ocean are:

Lordly Speech: The refined language of the Iron Lords, used by the upper classes only. For a lesser being to speak it, except under precisely defined circumstances, is a grievous crime.

Baser Speech (also known as Imperial): The “common tongue” of the Grey Empire, almost everyone within the empire's reach has mastered a few words of it.

High Veth: A lyrical, intricate language used by the veth, though other races consider it formal and stuffy.

Ta'Veth: A pidgin of Veth and Baser Speech, used by most veth in day-to-day conversation.

Groll: The language of the groll, a tongue which some scholars dismiss as simplistic but which contains many subtleties lost on those who do not live the rough Groll lifestyle.



V. STARTING THE CAMPAIGN

The following scenario presents one possible “introduction” to the world of Jupiter and the Iron Lords. Before you begin play, determine which player characters will be Natives, and which will be Strangers. Vehicles and creatures mentioned in this chapter will appear in the next issue of *POLYHEDRON*.

Act I: The Voyage of Minerva

In 2091, the United American Alliance launched the spaceship *Minerva*, the first manned expedition to Jupiter. *Minerva* was intended to establish a stable orbit around the giant planet, and from there launch a series of missions to explore the moons of Jupiter, most especially Europa.

Stranger PCs are members of *Minerva*’s crew. If the PCs begin at 1st level, their crew positions should reflect this—Medical Assistant, Secondary Computer Technician, Cargo Handler, and the like. Saddling the characters with such minor positions will help them in the long run, as the skills and feats necessary to run or manage a spacecraft will be of little use in the campaign to come. First-level characters will have a greater opportunity to shape themselves to fit their new world.

Native PCs will have little to do in the early stages of the first adventure. To make sure no one has to sit out and wait for the action, assign players of Native characters an NPC, a doomed member of *Minerva*’s crew. For an added spin, ask the Native PC players to pretend their NPCs are their real characters, which will make their deaths seem more shocking to the survivors.

The voyage from Earth to Jupiter goes smoothly. Give each player a few minutes of spotlight time to introduce their character, but don’t spend too much time on the preliminaries. A video-mail from home, a slight problem with the ship’s “intake manifold,” or a dispute over maintenance duties can all provide a bit of character flavor.

As *Minerva* approaches Jupiter, something goes terribly wrong. The ship’s engines refuse to obey the navigation console. Gravity and other crucial readings go haywire. Nothing coming through the ship’s sensors match expectations, and

Minerva’s carefully plotted orbit goes straight to Hell.

Let the players discuss emergency options, but nothing will work. In minutes, the doomed *Minerva* finds itself in a decaying spiral sure to lead to a quick death in the crushing pressure of Jupiter’s upper atmosphere.

If the PCs don’t think of it first, an NPC suggests a run for the ship’s emergency shuttlecraft. The small vessels boast powerful engines of their own, and theoretically have the power to blast out of Jupiter’s voracious orbit. Such an escape won’t offer the crew long-term survival, but it might grant them the time to discover what went wrong and enable them to warn allies on Earth who might some day come after them. Somehow, the player characters end up on the same shuttlecraft.

Despite its strong engines, the PCs’ shuttle falls victim to the same force that drew *Minerva* into the swirling yellow and red clouds of Jupiter. Death is imminent, leaving nothing left to do but wait for the planet’s pressure to crush the shuttle. Atmospheric pressure rises and rises as the PCs descend; the ship’s hull creaks ominously.

Suddenly, the pressure eases and the thick acidic clouds outside the windows clear, revealing a quick glimpse of an Earthlike landscape. The PCs make out a massive city on the distant shores of a vast ocean into which the shuttle plunges with increasing speed. The shuttle impacts sharply with the water. Somehow, its delicate crew survives!

Crashed on Jupiter!

Now the campaign truly begins. The PCs’ shuttle rapidly takes on water but remains momentarily afloat some 25 miles from the city of Kuldaar. Give the PCs some time to consider their predicament, roleplaying shock at being alive and afloat on an ocean of salt water, surrounded by breathable air when by all rights they should be dead. They won’t have long to wonder if they might have reached some sort of afterlife, however, as the shuttle sinks ten minutes after crashing into the turbulent waters.

About five minutes before the shuttle sinks forever, the nearby water begins to churn and the head and fore-ten-

tacles of a nalthis emerge from the deep. Naturally, the horrid creature attacks the player characters.

Patrol Sixteen

The shuttlecraft's crash attracts the attention of Patrol Sixteen, the crew of a small boat that serves as one of hundreds used by the Grey Empire to hunt for smugglers or spies in the waters near Kuldaar. If the PCs' battle against the nalthis goes poorly, the boat arrives in time to offer assistance. Otherwise, it keeps a safe distance until after the fight is over.

Stock Patrol Sixteen's sleek wooden craft with enough marikon archers (Strong2/Tough1 ordinaries) to prevent the player characters from hoping they can overpower it. The archers train their bows and crossbows upon the PCs, looking to a hardy marikon male who appears to be their leader. This figure, Commander Torgan (a Strong2/Dedicated2 ordinary), assumes the PCs are smugglers or escaped slaves until he gets a good look at them.

Torgan attempts to question the PCs, but the language barrier proves problematic. The players may wish to pantomime their plight, but this does little good, as Torgan has no concept of "worlds beyond the sky." No Jovian has ever seen the stars.

The skeptical Commander Torgan takes the characters into custody, stripping them of their gear, which he places in his private quarters for further study. The wind-powered voyage back to Kuldaar (helped in part by the load-lightening powers of lunth crystals) takes a full day, during which the PCs are thrown into the cargo hold with other prisoners—the Native PCs.

Act II: The Strangers Arrive

Each Native PC should have a good reason for having been picked up in the Cuthalik Ocean by Patrol Sixteen. Perhaps they're humble fisherfolk who simply lost or forgot to bring their identification papers. Perhaps they're smugglers, fleeing slaves, explorers from far across the ocean, or just in the wrong place at the wrong time.

Either way, the Native PCs and other Native NPCs in the cargo hold will be curious about the Strangers, and become even more curious once they discover no known language can breach the communications barrier. If any of the Strangers chose to reserve skill points, now is a great time to spend one on the Speak Language skill in order to pick up a Native language. Explain the newly bought skill as memories flowing up from dreams like strange déjà vu, perhaps establishing an excuse for the character to later pick up the Strange Memories feat.

Unless the PCs start trouble (a very likely occurrence), the day passes without major incident. The prisoners endure a seemingly endless string of minor abuses—poor food, filthy water, and the occasional surprise punch from one of the marikon guards—but little beyond that.

The marikon guards "escort" the passengers topside as the ship docks at Kuldaar's port. Seen up close, the sprawling city is both magnificent and terrifying. The heights of

the gray city stretch far above, but the PCs face rough wooden docks stinking with rotting sealife and trash dumped from above. The guards herd their prisoners to Kuldaar's lower levels, primitive structures composed of worked stone.

Once on dry land, the PCs may try to make a break for freedom. The guards are fairly tough, but should not be unbeatable, especially with the help of the Native PCs. Should the prisoners escape, they find themselves alone in a city that considers them criminals. None of the PCs have required identification, and Strangers have no knowledge of local culture. The characters must fight off would-be captors at every turn, and it's likely they'll find themselves imprisoned again shortly. If they somehow manage to evade pursuit (player characters can surprise you that way), proceed to Act IV: Escape!

Act III: The Arena of Kuldaar

Assuming the PCs do not escape, they soon find themselves in the lower levels of the city's vast Arena—Level Six, Sector 2, to be precise. The ancient stone walls stink with festering mold, and the bars on the PCs' cell are made of *telgir* wood, not the iron of newer marikon construction. One of the oldest sections of the arena still in active use, Sector 2 holds those prisoners deemed the lowest of possible orders, not even fit for good sport. No one survives here long.

The PCs and their newfound Native companions get a chance to know each other, as their captors leave them in the cell for two days with a number of Native NPCs.

Commander Torgan dumps the PCs' equipment in a nearby chamber, waiting for higher-ranking arena officers to attempt to make sense of it. Attentive prisoners might pick up guard chatter about "strange items" recently brought in from the unusual prisoners, including a room number corresponding to the items' location. Getting their equipment back will be an obvious and immediate goal for the PCs, so do your best to make the room's location obvious to your players.

As the players sit and wait for something terrible to happen, introduce some of the following encounters:

- A large, bullying marikon criminal, sentenced to death, attempts to intimidate the player character with the lowest Strength score.
- An elderly veth prisoner suddenly takes ill. The guards do nothing, but perhaps the PCs can aid him.
- A groll prisoner undertakes a bizarre ritual dance.
- A veth and groll come to blows over a petty argument about sleeping space. The PCs may choose to favor one over the other, or may attempt to break up the fight.
- Marikon guards remove several random prisoners (all NPCs) from the cell. Hours later, the guards callously drag their grisly remains past the cell. If the PCs had befriended one or more of the dead NPCs, so much the better.
- At some point, the PCs should aid or befriend a veth prisoner. This will become important as the adventure progresses.

Escape seems unlikely, as their guards (all Strong2 ordinaries) seldom open the cell door. Even food is slipped through the bars (break DC 27), leaving little chance for a surprise break-out. Any time a guard opens the cell, at least three more guards (armed with longswords) than there are PCs stand ready for a prisoner revolt. Any call of alarm summons five additional guards within 1d4 rounds.

The guards care nothing for ill prisoners or squabbles between captives. They have no wish to interrogate the prisoners, so calls of "I'll tell you everything I know" hold little allure. Nonetheless, should the PCs manage to devise a suitably cunning plan for escape, resist the urge to punish them and proceed to Act IV.

After two agonizing days, the guards release the PCs and a handful of NPCs (seemingly calling them out at random, as above). Under heavy guard, the jailers provide the party with primitive weapons (crude copies of veth daggers that deal 1 fewer point of damage per hit and break on a natural 1 on the attack roll). The guards then force the captives onto the gray sands of the arena, where a bored crowd stares down at them with undisguised contempt. Characters who speak Imperial recognize shouts to "get it over with" and demands to "bring on the real warriors." Particularly zealous members of the crowd pelt the PCs with unusual rotten fruit.

Positioned at a distant balcony, the arena master allows the shouting to die down before issuing a dramatic gesture. A previously disguised trap door at the center of the arena opens, revealing a hulking kluuv. The crowd roars as the gargantuan spider beast lunges hungrily toward the PCs!

Include enough disposable NPCs among the players' group to allow the characters to defeat the kluuv with minimal injuries. Don't hesitate to kill off most or all of the NPCs, and be sure to play up the crowd reaction to every gory death. This first exposure to the decadent marikon culture should forever quash any hopes the players might have of finding acceptance in their new home.

As one NPC dies, she slips a small key to a player character, revealing the location of a hidden exit in a storeroom between the arena entrance and the room holding the PCs' equipment. All the PCs must do is break free as they are being herded back to their cell and make a run for it...

Act IV: Escape!

Eventually, the PCs should break free of their imperial captors. Perhaps they've escaped through the secret passage revealed by the dying alien in Act III, or perhaps they've managed to create their own escape from captivity. One way or another, they find themselves in an underground passage, fleeing the city above.

The passage terminates in a wide ledge overlooking a steep cliff. A crimson jungle covers the ground below the cliff, and a large river lazily twists its way through the leafy expanse. A curious craft, apparently an air vehicle of some sort, stands perched upon the precipice. The unusual device is large enough to hold all the PCs, but seems to lack any obvious wings.

Ideally, one of the Native PCs knows how to fly a veth yacht. If not, now is a good time to cash in some reserved skill points in order to learn. Alternatively, the PCs can attempt to climb down the cliff, from whence they can follow the river or explore the jungle.

Native PCs soon deduce that the veth city of Salimar, a theoretically safe destination, should lie somewhere just beyond the woods, about four days away. The jungle itself provides ample food and water.

Naturally, something goes wrong. About two days into the journey, a bathar, flying far from its usual territory, attacks the yacht. The battle severely damages the ship, causing it to land in the jungle. The severity of the crash depends upon the PCs' piloting skill. Landing the damaged ship requires a DC 20 Pilot check. Each 3 points by which the check fails results in 1d6 points of damage to all passengers (DC 15 Reflex save for half damage).

The bathar, likely wounded or slain during the conflict, spins out of control and into the jungle near where the PCs land. A search of its body reveals the remains of a riding tackle as well as a pouch containing numerous documents. Although written in the veth alphabet, the documents have been coded and are impossible to decipher. The pouch bears the seal of the High Lord of Salimar, a symbol instantly recognizable to Native PCs.

The message encoded into the documents is entirely up to the GM. The pouch and its contents should be enough to encourage the players to travel to Salimar and to win some degree of favor from the High Lord. Beyond that, who knows? An entire world of adventure has opened to the PCs. They might become the defenders of Salimar, or they might venture deep into unknown lands, working with the downtrodden folk to defeat the brutal tyranny of the Iron Lords.

Other Adventures

The player characters have crash-landed on Jupiter, been captured at sea, were forced to fight in an arena for the pleasure of marikon spectators, and have been handed a mission to seek sanctuary among the veth. But a whole world awaits, and part of the fun of a planetary romance campaign is exploring the rich and unusual world upon which the Strangers have been stranded.

Consider some of the following story titles as inspiration for further adventures, and always try to keep your characters wondering about what new marvels might be found just beyond the horizon.

THE FLYING CITIES OF JUPITER
THE INFINITE OCEAN OF JUPITER
THE MIND-SPIDERS OF JUPITER
THE GLASS FOREST OF JUPITER
RENEGADES OF JUPITER
THE LIVING MOUNTAINS OF JUPITER

**THE IRON LORDS OF JUPITER RETURN NEXT MONTH!
 ONLY IN THE PAGES OF DUNGEON/POLYHEDRON #102!**



IV: LABOR PAINS

The malcontent drow, Downer, has inadvertently led invaders to the lair of his beholder boss. The party of adventurers interrupts what would have been Downer's "exit interview" with a sinister agenda spawned on the inescapable prison world of Căreeri.





WHAT THE!?

BLEEARRGH!
I'LL TEACH YOU
TO TROUBLE ME WITH
PETTY COMPLAINTS!

KYLE HUNTER'S

Downer



HELP ME,
DOWNER AND
I'LL DOUBLE
YOUR PAY!

WHAT PART
OF 'I QUIT'
DID YOU NOT
UNDERSTAND?



CHOOM



SPLORT

ZZZGT

YEEEE



FSSSST



HORF-
HORF! STILL
CONFIDENT YOU'LL
TAKE ME, BOUNTY
HUNTER?

UM,
YEAH... SO
I'M GOING TO
CLEAN OUT MY
DESK --

TO BE
CONTINUED